NATION

Kerala actor Idavela Babu held in rape case, released

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

ADB retains India's growth forecast at 7%

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

45th Chess Olympiad: Modi hails double Gold

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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SENSEX SETTLES ABOVE RECORD 85K

MUMBAI, 25 SEPT

Benchmark Sensex closed above the 85,000 level for the first time while Nifty settled at a fresh lifetime high on Wednesday as fag-end buying in banking and power shares helped stock markets recoup early losses.

After a see-saw trade during the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 255.83 points or 0.30 per cent to settle at an all-time high of 85,169.87. During the day, it surged 333.38 points or 0.39 per cent to hit a record intra-day peak of 85,247.42.

NSE Nifty climbed 63.75 points or 0.25 per cent to close at a record high of 26,004.15. During the day, it went up by 92.4 points or 0.35 per cent to reach a new intra-day peak of 26,032.80. BSE benchmark dipped 14.57 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 84,914.04. —*PTI*

Muda mess: Lokayukta probe sets stage for FIR

The order comes a day after HC upheld Guv's sanction

BENGALURU, 25 SEPT

A Special Court here on Wednesday ordered a Lokayukta police probe against Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment case, setting the stage for filing of an FIR against him.

The order of the Special Court Judge, Santhosh Gajanan Bhat, came a day after the High Court upheld the sanction granted by the Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot to conduct an investigation against Siddara-maiah on the allegations of illegalities in the allotment of 14 sites to his wife B M Parvathi by MUDA.

The Special Court exclusively to deal with criminal cases related to former and elected MPs/MLAs issued the order directing the Lokayukta police in Mysuru to initiate an investigation on the complaint filed by RTI activist Snehamayi Krishna.

The Court issued directions to take up the probe under section 156 (3) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) (that gives a magistrate the power to order an investigation into a cognisable offense.) and file the investigation report by 24 December.

The High Court had also vacated its 19 August interim order directing the Special Court to defer the deci-sion on complaints against the Chief Minister, giving the green signal for ordering a probe.

Reacting to the Special Court order, Siddaramaiah reiterated that he was ready to face an investigation.

"Already I have said that I am ready to face an investigation. I am not afraid of a probe," Siddaramaiah told reporters here. "I am ready for a legal fight. I had said this yesterday and I am reiterating it today as well." —*PTI*

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah with ministers at a meeting at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Wednesday **PHOTO: SALAR**

> **I am ready for a legal fight. I had said this yesterday and I am reiterating it today as well. Already I have said that I am ready to face an investigation. I am not afraid of a probe**
>
> —Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister

MODI SLAMS CONGRESS GOVT IN MUDA SCAM

SONIPAT, 25 SEPT

Drawing attention to Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's alleged role in the MUDA (Mysuru Urban Development Authority) scam, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that the Congress is completely en-trenched in corruption.

Addressing a rally in Sonipat Haryana, days ahead of the Assembly elections in the State, Modi while highlighting the failures of the Congress party, drew attention towards the MUDA scam, which allegedly involves the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. "It has only been two years, and just look at the Congress government in Karnataka. The Chief Minister is facing accusations of a land scam. When he appeared in the High Court, he was dismissed." Modi said. —*PTI*

A newly married woman stands in a queue to cast her vote during the second phase of Jammu and Kashmir elections, in Budgam **PHOTO: PTI**

2nd phase of J&K Assembly polls see 56% turnout

SRINAGAR, 25 SEPT

More than 56 per cent voters on Wednesday exercised their franchise in the second phase of polling for 26 seats in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Assembly polls.

The polling passed off peacefully, officials said.

Addressing a press conference here, J&K Chief Electoral Officer PK Pole said the second phase recorded a turnout of 56.05 per cent.

Pole said the percentage was tentative as polling was going on at some places like Hazratbal and Reasi.

He said the polling was peaceful and by and large smooth.

"The polling was overall peaceful. Some stray incidents like arguments, etc took place, but there is no need for re-poll anywhere," he added.

During the second phase, a 16-member delegation of foreign envoys visited the valley to witness the polls. This is perhaps for the first time since the eruption of insurgency that international observers were al-lowed to witness the elections in J&K.

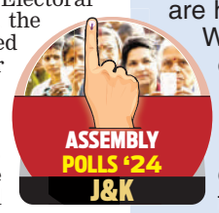
The move drew criticism from former chief minister Omar Abdullah who said the polls in J&K were an internal matter of the country. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

16 foreign diplomats watch polls

Srinagar, 25 Sept

The members of a foreign delegation who are here on Wednesday to observe the Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir expressed satisfaction over the conduct of polls. The delegation includes of diplomats from 16 countries, including the US and Norway.



BJP MP suspects Pak, China behind Waqf feedback

NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

Raising concern over the staggering number of feedback -- nearly 1.25 crore submissions -- received by the parliamentary committee scrutinising the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, BJP member Nishikant Dubey has called for a home ministry probe, including into possible role of Pakistan's ISI and China.

In a letter to the committee's chairperson Jagdambika Pal, he said the investigation must also cover the possible roles of fundamentalist organisations, individuals like radical Islamic preacher Zakir Naik, and foreign powers such as the ISI and China besides their proxies.

Dubey, a committee member and a fourth-term Lok Sabha MP, said the geographical origins of these submissions need immediate attention, claiming that it is statistically improbable that such an over-whelming volume response could emerge organically from within India alone.

He described the volume of feedback as "unprecedented" which, he said, has set a global record for leg-islative submissions and deserves scrutiny over the motivations and sources behind these communica-tions.

He said it signals a disturbing trend that cannot be ignored. "I believe it is vital that the committee ad-dresses these concerns head-on to ensure the integrity and independence of our leg-islative process," he added. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Shirur landslide: Missing driver's body recovered

KARWAR, 25 SEPT

The body of missing Kerala lorry driver Arjun was recovered along with his vehicle on Wednesday from a river, more than two months after a landslide at Shirur village in Uttara Kannada district, police said. The 16 July landslide on National Highway 66 claimed the lives of eight people. With the recovery of Ar-jun's body, the death toll has gone up to nine, they said. The search operations started soon after the landslide were halted on 28 July due to adverse weather conditions, high river current and other factors. However, they were resumed later. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had written to his Karnataka counterpart Siddaramaiah requesting him to resume operations to trace the lorry driver from Kozhikode. —*PTI*

TRAFFIC STOPS TRAIN

In yet another peak Bengaluru moment, a train was forced to stop as vehicles continued to cross the railway track. The incident took place at Munnekolala Railway Crossing near Outer Ring Road **PHOTO: X**

AFTER EY, HDFC EMPLOYEE DIES IN LUCKNOW OFFICE

LUCKNOW, 25 SEPT

A woman employee of HDFC bank collapsed and died in the Vibhuti Khand area in Lucknow, police said on Wednesday.

According to News18 the deceased, Sadaf Fatima, 40, collapsed after falling off her chair. The cause of the woman's death is yet to be ascertained, they said. "Her co-workers rushed her to a nearby govern-ment hospital where doctors pronounced her dead," said Station House Office, Vibhuti Khand, Sunil Kumar Singh. The body was sent for post-mortem examination. —*PTI with Agencies*

>>>More on Page 4

No part of India can be called Pakistan: SC to K'taka HC judge

NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

The Supreme Court on Wednesday cautioned courts against making comments that may be construed as "misogynistic" or directed towards a particular "gender or community" and said no part of Indian territory can be called Pakistan.

The apex court's observations came as it closed the suo motu proceedings over Karnataka High Court judge Justice **V Srishananda**'s alleged objectionable comments during court proceedings. The Supreme Court also noted that he had apologised for his observations during open court proceedings on 21 September.

PHOTO: X

A five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud observed that since Justice Srishananda was not a party to proceedings before it, "we desist from making any fur-ther observations save and ex-cept to express our serious concern about both the refer-ence to gender and to a seg-ment of the com-munity".

"Casual observations may well reflect a certain degree of individual bias particularly when they are likely to be per-ceived as being directed to a particular gender or commu-nity," the bench, also comprising Jus-tices Sanjiv Khanna, BR Gavai, Surya Kant and Hrishikesh Roy, said on Wednesday. "The perception of justice to every segment of society is as important as the rendition of justice as an objective fact," the bench said.

After the bench dictated the order in the court room, Attorney General R Venkataramani referred to some messages on X about the observations and termed them "absolutely vitriolic". —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

India's 1st Knowledge Health City launch today

BENGALURU, 25 SEPT

State government's ambi-tious "Knowledge Health Innovation Research-City" (KHIR-City) project, touted as the first of its kind in the country, is set to be launched on 26 September. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is slated to give the green signal for the works in the first phase of the project at a ceremony in 'Vidhana Soudha', official sources said. The sources said the project would be estab-lished on 2,000 acres, with the first phase being devel-oped on 500 acres. "The project with an estimated investment of over Rs 40,000 crore is expected to generate around one lakh jobs— both direct and indirect," an official said. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

SUICIDE SUSPECTED

Mahalaksmi murder suspect dies

BHUBANESWAR, 25 SEPT

The prime suspect in the Mahalakshmi murder case, Mukti Ranjan Roy who allegedly killed his colleague Mahalakshmi, cut her into 59 pieces and kept them in a refrigerator in Malleswaram, was found hanging from a tree at Bhadrak district in Odisha on Wednesday, according to reports.

The accused was staying at Booyakapura region near Pandi village in Dushiri police station limits

The accused is the deceased's colleague who had allegedly opposed her closeness to another man, whose name had not been disclosed by the police

The police also recovered a diary, believed to be belonging to the deceased in which he confessed to killing the woman. However, before they could detain him for questioning, Roy reportedly took the extreme step.

PHOTO: X

Earlier this week, Mahalakshmi's estranged husband said he suspected a man named Ashraf was involved in the murder as he and the victim were allegedly involved in an extramarital affair with him. The husband claimed that the Ashraf hailed from Uttarakhand.

The maggot-infested body of Mahalakshmi, a 29-year-old saleswoman, was found in the refrigerator at her one-bedroom apartment in Malleshwaram on 21 September. According to police, it was chopped into 59 pieces.

Home Minister G arameshwara confirmed that the suspect was a native of Odisha and had been living in the City before fleeing after the crime. Four police teams have been sent to Odisha and West Bengal to arrest the suspect.

The man had reportedly confessed to his brother over phone. However the accused fled the State, even after his brother asked him to surrender. —*Salar News*

Kangana withdraws farm laws remark

SHIMLA/NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

Facing backlash and censure from her own party for calling for bringing back the farm laws that were repealed in 2021, BJP MP Kangana Ranaut on Wednesday withdrew her statement and expressed regret as the party swung to defuse the crisis amid the Haryana Assembly polls campaign.

Kangana who often sparked rows with her controversial statements, said on X that her remarks were her personal opinions and did not represent the BJP's view. She said she must remember that she is not only an artiste but also a BJP member now and her statements should be in line with her party's policies. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Display owners' names on eateries: Himachal govt

SHIMLA, 25 SEPT

Himachal Pradesh Minister and Congress leader Vikramaditya Singh on Wednesday said that an order related to the mandatory display of outlet owner's details has been issued during a joint meeting with the Public Works Urban Development and Municipal Corporation, adding that every shopkeeper and street vendor has to display their identification.

"We did a meeting with the Urban Development (UD) and the Municipal Corporation. To make sure that hygienic food is sold, a decision has been taken for all the street vendors... especially those selling edible items," Vikramaditya told reporters on Wednesday.

He said that the people had expressed their concerns over the hygiene of the food. Vikramaditya Singh also announced the development through a Facebook post and said that the decision was taken during a joint meeting with the Public Works Urban Development and Municipal Corporation. This comes after Uttar Pradesh government on Tuesday directed that the name and address of oper-ators, proprietors, and managers should be mandatorily displayed at all food centres. —*ANI*

PHOTO: SALAR

Train derails on Hubballi-Solapur line, services hit

BENGALURU, 25 SEPT

A goods train derailed early Wednesday morning near the Bhima River bridge on the Hubballi-Solapur line, leading to significant disruptions in passenger train services. The incident occurred around 1.30 am when a pair of wheels from the trailing locomotive of an empty goods rake derailed between Lachyan and Tadwal in the Gadag-Hotgi section. According to South Western Railway (SWR) officials, the locomotive was approaching bridge 91 at a slow speed of 12 kmph when track sinkage was reported. Several passenger trains have been either cancelled, partially cancelled, or diverted, including routes between Dharwad and Solapur, Hosapete and Vijayapura, Hyderabad and Vijayapura, and Solapur and Dharwad. Other services, such as Mysuru-Bagalkot and Pandharpur-Mysuru, have also faced alterations with portions of their journeys curtailed. —*Salar News*

2 students drown while swimming in Udupi lake

UDUPI, 25 SEPT

Two school students lost their lives while swimming in a lake in Yedthare village of this district, police said on Wednesday. The victims were said to be residents of the area. According to police, the incident occurred shortly after the boys had completed their school exams on Tuesday. Eager for a break, they left home to swim in the nearby lake, a popular spot among the local youth. However, their recreational outing took a tragic turn. Both were students of Byndoor Government High School. The police and fire brigade immediately launched a search operation on Tuesday night and retrieved the bodies. —*PTI*

No flaws in med equipment purchase: Minister

BENGALURU, 25 SEPT

Medical Education Minister Sharan Prakash Patil has refuted allegations raised by BJP regarding irregularities in the procurement of medical equipment for government medical colleges in State. The procurement was conducted transparently and fairly, adhering to Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurements (KTPP) Act, Patil said on Wednesday. "We awarded tenders to the lowest bidders," Patil said. On 22 September, BJP alleged a Rs 117-crore scam in Medical Education Department in procuring equipment for modernising 114 modular operation theatres across 18 State-run medical colleges. The minister challenged BJP to produce documentary evidence to support their accusations. Patil said all documents related to the procurement are available in the public domain, leaving no room for manipulation. —*Salar News*

Oppn lays siege to CM's home over MUDA

Police detain BJP leaders who were marching to CM's house demanding his resignation

BJP leaders protest outside Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's house 'Cauvery' and demand for his resignation in Bengaluru on Wednesday; JD(S) protests at Freedom Park ***PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD***

BENGALURU, 25 SEPT

Opposition BJP and JD(S) on Wednesday sought to step up its demand for Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's resignation following the High Court's verdict in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) case as they tried to lay siege to his residence here.

Holding posters, placards and raising slogans, members of BJP Yuva Morcha marched towards 'Cauvery' but the police thwarted their attempt, took them into preventive custody and whisked them away in a bus.

Leaders and workers of the JD(S), an NDA partner, headed by former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda, staged a demonstration at the Freedom Park here before proceeding to "Cauvery" but were stopped by police.

BJP National Spokesperson CR Kesavan on questioned why Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has not sought Siddaramaiah's resignation.

Activists hold a silent protest against Opposition parties for defaming CM Siddaramaiah, at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Wednesday

"It was very shocking to see a beleaguered, lame duck Siddaramaiah desperately clinging on to his chair after losing his moral compass," Kesavan told ANI.

> **I believe the officers are responsible for the wrongdoing. However, I'm confident the Chief Minister is not involved. People who do politics will continue to do so but isn't there a difference between law and politic**
>
> -DK Shivakumar, DyCM

"What was even more shocking and dismaying was Rahul's cunning opportunistic politics. Instead of asking Siddaramaiah to tender his resignation, Rahul is protecting him. Why is Rahul tongue-tied? Why is he voiceless?" he added. Meanwhile, State BJP president BY Vijayendra demanded an apology from Congress leaders to Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot for maligning his reputation by accusing him of being a political puppet.

High Court on Tuesday upheld the sanction granted by the Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot to conduct an investigation against Siddaramaiah on the allegations of illegalities in the allotment of 14 sites to his wife B M Parvathi by MUDA.

The court had also vacated its 19 August interim order directing the Special Court to defer the decision on complaints against the Chief Minister, giving the green signal for ordering a probe.

It had also dismissed Siddaramaiah's petition challenging the legality of the Governor's August 16 order granting approval for investigation under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption (PC) Act, 1988. –*Agencies*

EX-LOKAYUKTA JUDGE SAYS CM SHOULD RESIGN

BENGALURU, 25 SEPT

Weighing in on the MUDA site allotment case, Former Karnataka Lokayukta Justice Santosh Hegde on Wednesday said Chief Minister Siddaramaiah should resign in view of the serious allegations against him.

He also dismissed Siddaramaiah's claim that he has not committed anything wrong, and said the High Court has found that prima facie there was evidence of wrongdoing.

"It is up to him (Siddaramaiah) to decide whether to resign or not but when there is such a serious allegation I feel that in public view point, he should resign though there is nothing wrong in not giving resignation as per law," Hegde told reporters here.

The retired Supreme Court judge further said, "The sanction to investigate the Chief Minister was granted in MUDA case where the High Court has said that prima facie there is evidence."

> **Now Karnataka. BJP's insidious ways to destabilise and topple elected governments: Luring MLAs, misusing tenth schedule, instilling fear (ED, CBI) and governors acting beyond their constitutional responsibilities**
>
> -Kapil Sibal, Rajya Sabha MP

2 get lifer in Shrimati murder case

MANGALURU, 25 SEPT

A court here has handed life imprisonment to two people involved in the 2019 murder of a chit fund operator, whose severed body parts were found in gunny bags in various parts of the city.

On Tuesday, the First Additional District and Sessions Court in Mangaluru sentenced Jonas Samson, 35, and Victoria Mathias, 47, to life in the murder of Shrimati Shetty.

The third accused, Raju, 34, was sentenced to six and a half months of simple imprisonment.

Samson and Mathias were also fined Rs. 25,000 each.

the court directed that Shetty's mother be paid a compensation of Rs 75,000, and the funds be facilitated through the legal services authority.

- In a fit of rage, Jonas struck her on the head with a wooden object, leaving her unconscious. Along with his wife, Victoria, Jonas proceeded to rob Shetty of her gold ornaments before the murder. They dismembered her body into 29 pieces, placed them in plastic sacks, and scattered them across the city at night.

According to police, the 42-year-old victim was a resident of Attavara in Mangaluru and ran an electronics shop while also managing a chit fund business.

Jonas had two memberships in her chit fund but defaulted on his monthly payments. When Shetty visited Jonas' residence on 11 May, 2019, at around 9:15 am to collect the due payment, a heated argument ensued. In a fit of rage, Jonas struck her on the head with a wooden object, leaving her unconscious. Along with his wife, Victoria, Jonas proceeded to rob Shetty of her gold ornaments before the murder. They dismembered her body into 29 pieces, placed them in plastic sacks, and scattered them across the city at night.

Her belongings, including a vanity bag and slippers, were burnt inside their house to eliminate evidence. —*PTI*

CONG MEET IN KERALA

AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan, AICC General Secretaries Deepa Dasmunshi and KC Venugopal attend the Wayanad District Congress Committee meeting on Wednesday in Kalpetta, Kerala. The meeting was held to discuss the strengthening of the party and addressing key regional concerns

PHOTO: SALAR

State to launch India's first Knowledge Health City today

BENGALURU, 25 SEPT

State government's ambitious "Knowledge Health Innovation Research-City" (KHIR-City) project, touted as the first of its kind in the country, is set to be launched on 26 September.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is slated to give the green signal for the works in the first phase of the project at a ceremony in 'Vidhana Soudha', official sources said.

The sources said the project would be established on 2,000 acres, with the first phase being developed on 500 acres. "The project with an estimated investment of over Rs 40,000 crore is expected to generate around one lakh jobs— both direct and indirect," an official said.

KHIR-City draws inspiration from global innovation hubs such as Singapore's Biopolis, and Research Triangle Park in the US, the sources said.

Elements from Bengaluru's Electronics City will also be incorporated into the project, located between Doddaballapura and Dobaspet, about 50km from Kempegowda International Airport.

The KHIR-City is expected to make a significant contribution to the state's economy and boost exports, the official said, adding, it will be home to world-class universities, hospitals, innovative industries, and research institutions. —*PTI*

KHIR-City draws inspiration from global innovation hubs such as Singapore's Biopolis ***PHOTO: SALAR***

K'TAKA TO SHIFT RGUHS TO RAMANAGARA

BENGALURU, 25 SEPT

State government on Wednesday decided to shift the Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences (RGUHS) from Ramanagara to Kanakapura. This long-pending proposal, first introduced in 2008, will be resubmitted to the National Medical Commission (NMC) for approval.

Alongside this, the government is focusing on enhancing the infrastructure of the Kanakapura Medical College. However, the government is waiting for NMC approval to decide on the shifting date.

Addressing the reporters here, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, said that Rs 600 crore has been allocated for the land acquisition for this project. The decision to shift the medical university to Ramanagara was taken by JD(S)-BJP alliance government in 2006. The original plan included a super-speciality hospital, multiple medical and nursing colleges, hostels, and staff quarters to serve the people of Ramanagara, Mysuru and Mandya. In 2022, BJP government gave administrative approval for the project, and construction commenced in March 2023. However, amidst these developments, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's recent budget announcement introduced a new medical college for Kanakapura, which led to a decision to shift the proposed medical college from the RGUHS campus to Kanakapura instead. —*Salar News*

Leopard roaming in Electronics City captured

BENGALURU, 25 SEPT

A four-year-old male leopard was caught in a trap in Electronics City area here, over a week after it was spotted roaming in the tech hub, forest officials said on Wednesday.

After a CCTV footage of the leopard crossing a flyover near a toll plaza went viral, the residents of Electronic city were put on high alert. Ever since the animal was spotted, the forest officials were on toes trying to capture the big elusive cat.

"We laid a trap for the past four to five days. However, it did not fall into it. For two days, we had erected 'Tumkur trap cage' (which is like a big enclosure) so, leopard would walk in with its big tail inside the cage and get trapped inside it. That is how we caught the leopard on Tuesday night," Deputy Conservator of Forest (DCF), Bengaluru Urban Ravindra Kumar told PTI.

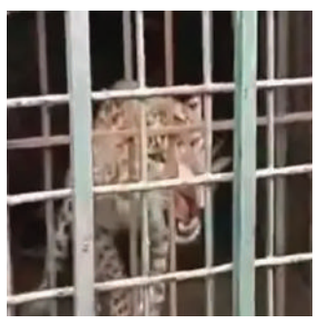


PHOTO: ANI

According to officials, the leopard was caught in an open area in Electronics City, where the trap was laid. The leopard is healthy and has been shifted to Bannerghatta Biological Park. —*PTI*

AFTER PAK REMARKS

SC asks judges to stop making misogynistic remarks in courts

BENGALURU/NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

While hearing the a suo motu case concerning the controversial comments made by Karnataka High Court judge Justice V Srishananda, the Supreme Court on Wednesday warned courts against misogynistic or biased remarks directed towards a particular "gender or community" and said that no part of Indian territory can be called Pakistan.

Srishananda had invited outrage on social media last week by referring to a Muslim-dominated locality in Bengaluru as 'Pakistan'.

In one of the clips that went viral on social media, he referred the sub-locality in West Bengaluru as "Pakistan". In another video, he was seen reprimanding a woman lawyer for answering a question put to the counsel for the opposite party.

The Supreme Court also noted that he had apologised for his observations during open court proceedings on 21 September.

PHOTO: PTI

A five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud observed that since Justice Srishananda was not a party to proceedings before it, "we desist from making any further observations save and except to express our serious concern about both the reference to gender and to a segment of the community".

"Casual observations may well reflect a certain degree of individual bias particularly when they are likely to be perceived as being directed to a particular gender or community," the bench, also comprising Justices Sanjiv Khanna, BR Gavai, Surya Kant and Hrishikesh Roy, said on Wednesday. —*PTI*

Officials get showcause notice in HMT scam

BENGALURU, 25 SEPT

Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre ordered the issuance of showcause notices to the Forest Department officials for their alleged involvement in the illegal transfer of reserve forest land in the Peenya-Jalahalli area, valued at over Rs 10,000 crore to Hindustan Machine Tools (HMT) in 1965.

These officials reportedly violated rules while selling the land.

Though the land was declared as forest on 11 June, 1886 in Mysore State, HMT allegedly sold the land illegally to many government departments, institutions, and private parties, violating the Forest (Conservation) Act, of 1980. The Karnataka Forest Department claims that nearly 160 acres were sold off by HMT between 1997 and 2004 for over Rs 313 crore. Khandre instructed the Additional Chief Secretary of the Department to take immediate action against those responsible.

He has mandated that all implicated officials respond to the notices within seven days, after which further action will be taken. The issue stems from senior forest department officials filing a petition in the Supreme Court, seeking the denotification of forest. Under the Karnataka Forest Act of 1963, once land is designated as a reserve forest, any decision to declassify it as non-forest must be approved by both houses of the state legislature.

However, some officials bypassed these requirements, proceeding with the legal petition without informing the Forest Minister or obtaining Cabinet approval in 1965.

—*Salar News*

TMC Basirhat MP Sk Nurul Islam dies at 61

KOLKATA, 25 SEPT

TTrinamool Congress (TMC) Basirhat MP Haji Sk Nurul Islam who was suffering from cancer died at his residence in North 24 Parganas district on Wednesday, party sources said. He was 61. Expressing grief over his demise, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said Nurul Islam will be remembered for his tireless work for uplift of the poor in the remote Sunderban area. "I convey my condolences to his family, friends and colleagues," she said. Nurul was first elected from the Basirhat Lok Sabha seat in 2009. He was elected from Haroa assembly segment under Basirhat on TMC ticket in 2016. Condoling his death, TMC National General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee also condoled his death. —*PTI*

Kejri writes to RSS chief on PM's actions, politics

NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal wrote to RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Wednesday, seeking answers to five questions on the BJP's politics and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's actions. Expressing concern, Kejriwal said the direction in which the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Centre is taking the country as well as its politics are harmful for India. "If this continues, our country and democracy will be finished," he said in the letter to Bhagwat. His other questions were if the RSS-BJP's rule on the age for retirement also applied to Modi as it did for leaders like L K Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi, and how Bhagwat felt when BJP chief JP Nadda said his party does not need the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the ideological mentor of the saffron party. In his letter to the RSS sarsanghchalak, Kejriwal said these questions are in the mind of every Indian, adding that he expects Bhagwat will ponder over those and come up with replies. —*PTI*

Wife of slain Indore BJYM office-bearer found hanging

INDORE, 25 SEPT

Three months after a BJYM office-bearer of the Indore unit was shot dead by two persons, his wife was found hanging in their house on Wednesday, police said. Prima facie, Deepika Kalyane, 28, hanged herself using a sari. Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police Ramsanehi Mishra said police have not found a suicide note from the spot, adding that the case is being investigated from various angles. Kalyane's husband Monu Kalyane, 35, the vice-president of BJYM's Indore unit, was shot dead over an old rivalry on the intervening night of 22 and 23 June under the MG Road police station limits, leading to the arrest of his neighbours Arjun Pathrod and Piyush Pathrod. —*PTI*

Jarange ends fast over Maratha quota after 9 days

JALNA, 25 SEPT

Maratha activist Manoj Jarange on Wednesday called off his indefinite fast, nine days after its launch for the OBC quota demand, citing pleas from members of the Maratha community to withdraw his hunger strike. Speaking to his supporters in Antarwali Sarati village in Jalna district, Jarange said he had decided to call off the fast keeping in mind the sentiments of the Maratha community. "We will deal with those who have hurt the Maratha community," Jarange said. Jarange sat on a hunger strike on September 17, his sixth in a year, to demand reservation to the Maratha community under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category. Jarange said the Maratha community suffered a lot in the last 70 years. "We want the reservation for a better future for our youth," he added. —*PTI*

Omar: Envoys' J&K guided tour not good

'Don't need their certificate on internal matters'

SRINAGAR, 25 SEPT

National Conference (NC) leader Omar Abdullah Wednesday lashed out at the Centre for inviting foreign diplomats to observe the ongoing assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, saying the polls were an internal matter of India and "we do not need their certificate".

"I don't know why foreigners should be asked to check elections here," the NC vice president told reporters here. "When foreign governments comment, then the Government of India says 'this is an internal matter for India' and now suddenly they want foreign observers to come and look at our elections."

This "guided tour" is not a good thing, he said, alleging the Centre wants to take credit for the people's participation in these polls "which is a betrayal with the people here".

Abdullah said the assembly elections in J-K "are an internal matter for us", and "we do not need their certificate".

Later, talking to reporters after casting his vote here, Abdullah said if India does not want the interference or comments of foreign nations over J-K "then why are they invited here?"

"No permission was given to any foreign journalist who had applied to cover the elections. But, these diplomats are being given a guided tour like tourists which is not a good thing," he said.

On the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's visit to J-K on Wednesday, the NC vice president said the Congress should focus more in Jammu. —*PTI*

Electric bills, water a concern for women voters

The election campaign of all the major political parties in Jammu and Kashmir revolved around the revocation and restoration of the erstwhile state's special status but women voters are more worried about the rising electricity bill, water and foodgrains through the public distribution system. While the electricity tariffs have remained unchanged for several years in Jammu and Kashmir, the Power Development has revised the load agreements and that has nearly doubled the monthly bills of the consumers. —*PTI*

> **Those refugees who came from PoK, the promises made to them by Manmohan Singh ji will be fulfilled... Sorry... Kashmiri Pandits...promises made to Kashmiri Pandits will be fulfilled**
>
> -Rahul Gandhi, Leader of Opposition, makes a faux pas

PM: Cong will ruin Haryana if in power

'They snatch the rights of Dalits & downtroden'

SONIPAT, 25 SEPT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday launched a blistering attack on Congress saying if it comes to power in Haryana even by mistake, stability and development will be at stake because of its "infighting" and this will ruin the state.

Addressing a poll rally in Gohana in this district, he lashed out at Congress over the issue of reservation, alleging opposing reservation and hatred towards it are in its DNA. The Assembly poll is going to start on 5 October.

"In the past few years wherever it formed governments, Chief Ministers and ministers were involved in infighting. They have nothing to do with the pain and problems of the people," Modi said citing the example of Congress-ruled Karnataka.

Modi also mentioned about alleged infighting in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh when Congress was in power there. "Haryana has right over me," he said.

Whenever Congress remained in power, it snatched rights of Dalits and downtrodden, he alleged. Whoever became Prime Minister from Congress's 'royal family', they always opposed reservation, he said. He said under BJP government, Haryana has made place among top states in industry and agriculture sectors. —*PTI*

KEY ISSUES IN FOCUS

- Congress claims BJP failed to fill 2 lakh vacant government job posts. BJP has promised to give as many jobs as possible
- The ongoing farmers' protest for a guaranteed MSP for crops is also in the spotlight in the wake of state assembly polls
- Centre's Agnipath scheme for military recruitment is also being criticised by Congress. BJP has assured that there will be a guarantee of government jobs for every Agniveer

RABIA KIDWAI, AAP, Seat: Nuh

1ST WOMAN CANDIDATE FROM NUH IN HARAYANA

Rabia Kidwal is the first woman to contest Assembly polls from the constituency where women are rarely seen without a veil, let alone lead a political campaign and fight an election. She has been fielded against Congress MLA Aftab Ahmed and Lok Dal's Tahir Hussain.

BADLAPUR ENCOUNTER

Parents of Akshay Shinde outside Kalwa Hospital, in Thane *PHOTO: PTI*

Why was accused shot in head: HC

MUMBAI, 25 SEPT

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday said the shoot-out of Badlapur sexual assault case accused Akshay Shinde could have been avoided and urged for the probe into his death to be carried out in a fair and impartial manner.

Why the accused was shot in the head instead of opening fire on his hand or legs first? it asked.

"Ordinarily, the retaliation would be on the leg or arm. Why directly on the head? Does he (police) not know where the shot has to be fired? It may have been spontaneous. The first reaction should have been to disarm him. The investigation has to be done fairly and impartially," the court said.

It said this shoot-out cannot be termed as an 'encounter'. The bench raised questions on the shoot-out, and said it could have been avoided. The bench said, "It was very hard to believe Shinde managed to seize a pistol from a police officer and open fire at this stage. It is not very easy to unlock and open fire from a pistol."

Justice Chavan said, "I have fired pistol hundred times. It is hard to unlock and fire. Revolver is easier. Any Tom, Dick or Harry can do it. But a pistol is very hard to fire."

"We want to know whether it was point-blank range...distance from where shot was fired. Ballistic experts would know. Was it an entry and exit wound? If yes, where was the exit. All these details would have to be submitted on the next date," the HC said. It posted the matter for further hearing on 3 October.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Wednesday said that the police fired in self-defence. The cops were injured in the encounter. We should support the police, he said. —*PTI*

EAM: India engaging Russia & Ukraine for peace talks

NEW YORK, 25 SEPT

India has been engaging both Russia and Ukraine to see if there is something it can do that would hasten the end of the conflict and initiate serious negotiation between them, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said.

"We believe that wars are not the way of settling disputes. We don't believe that a solution is going to come from the battlefield," Jaishankar said during an interaction at an event titled 'India, Asia and the World' hosted by Asia Society and the Asia Society Policy Institute here on Tuesday.

Responding to a question on what is India going to do to help solve the conflict, Jaishankar said, "We think at some point there will be a negotiation, and such a negotiation has to obviously include the parties. It cannot be a one-sided negotiation.

PHOTO: PTI

"And from those assessments, we have been engaging both the Russian Government and the Ukrainian Government in Moscow and in Kyiv and in other places to see whether there is something we can do which would hasten the end of the conflict and initiate some kind of serious negotiation between them."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in New York on Monday before the Indian leader wrapped up his three-day visit to the US that included his participation in the Quad Leader's Summit and his address to the UN's Summit of the Future.

He added that for India, "our history, after independence, we've never really had anything other than a positive experience with Soviet Union and then with Russia." —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Decision soon on seat-sharing: Shinde after meeting Shah

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 25 SEPT

Ahead of the Maharashtra Assembly polls, Union Home Minister Amit Shah has met Chief Minister Eknath Shinde as well as Deputy Chief Ministers Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar.

After the meeting, when reporters asked Shinde at the city airport about seat-sharing, the CM said, "The meeting was positive and a decision will be taken soon. Talks are moving ahead positively with co-ordination."

Shah is on a two-day visit to Maharashtra from Tuesday. The ruling Mahayuti partners- Shiv Sena led by Shinde, BJP and the Pawar-headed NCP- have been holding discussions on seat-sharing for the state Assembly polls, which are likely to be held in November.

Pawar and NCP working President Praful Patel also reached the venue later and the meeting went on till around 12.30 am on Wednesday. In the current Assembly, BJP is the single largest party with 103 MLAs. —*PTI*

TMC MLA flayed for grand Durja pooja call

KOLKATA, 25 SEPT

Amid ongoing protests over the rape-murder of a medic at RG Kar Hospital and calls by members of civil society organisations to observe the Durga Puja festival solemnly, a Trinamool Congress (TMC) MLA on Wednesday urged organisers to celebrate with greater grandeur.

Naryan Goswami, the TMC MLA from Ashoknagar in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas, made this call during a meeting with Durga Puja organisers in Madhyamgram, asserting the need to counter "the ploy by some to disrupt the biggest festival in Bengal and malign the state's image."

PHOTO: X

A video of his remarks has gone viral, although PTI has not independently verified its authenticity.

Meanwhile, West Bengal unit of the Congress on Wednesday started a sit-in, scheduled to be a two-day affair, in Esplanade area of Kolkata, demanding speedy justice for the RG Kar Hospital rape-murder victim.

Newly appointed West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee president Subhankar Sarkar and his predecessor Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury took part in the dharna along with many women and men party workers.

Agitating RG Kar junior doctors shout slogans during hospital inquiry panel hearing. Slogans like "down with threat culture" and "down with Bengal lobby." —*PTI*

Laddu row: 'Forgiveness rituals needed'

AMARAVATI, 25 SEPT

YSRCP chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Wednesday called on people to take part in temple rituals (pooja) across Andhra Pradesh on 28 September to atone for the sin allegedly committed by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu through his allegations on Tirupati laddus.

Reddy's appeal comes days after Naidu alleged during a NDA legislative party meeting that the previous YSRCP government did not even spare Sri Venkateswara temple and used substandard ingredients and animal fat for making laddus. "YSRCP is calling for statewide rituals in temples to sanitise (undo) this sin committed by Chandrababu on Saturday, September 28," said the former CM in a post on X.

PHOTO: PTI

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan has embarked on 11-day penance to propitiate the deity over the alleged sacrilege. —*PTI*

Life at risk without security vehicle: Champai

RANCHI, 25 SEPT

Former Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren, who joined the BJP last month, on Wednesday accused the Hemant Soren government in the state of putting his life at risk by withdrawing all security vehicles assigned to him

The former Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader alleged that withdrawing his security vehicles was a political conspiracy.

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Wednesday compared Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh with "rats" and accused both BJP and RSS of attempting to undermine communal harmony for electoral gains.

Addressing a rally at Bhognadih in Sahibganj, Soren claimed that the BJP is sowing discord between Hindu and Muslim communities, specifically pointing to Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's involvement.

"RSS is invading the state like rats and destroying it. Chase such forces away when you see them entering your villages with 'handia' and 'daru' (locally brewed liquor)...They want to create communal disturbances and tension ahead of elections for political gains," Soren said speaking at rally virtually from Ranchi. —*PTI*

Sikh body voices support for Rahul's remarks in US

NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

A Sikh body on Wednesday came out in support of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's remarks during his recent US visit about the community, saying its members have an inalienable right to adhere to and protect their religious and cultural rights.

In a statement, Khushhal Singh, general secretary of Kendri Sri Guru Singh Sabha said Gandhi's special mention of Sikhs' freedom to wear turban and worship in gurdwaras was an open recognition of their distinct religious and cultural identity.

He said the leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha rightly identified the decades-old distortions in Indian politics as caste hierarchy and religion-cultural conflicts which "invariably manifested as violence and misgovernance".

Rahul Gandhi *PHOTO: PTI*

Addressing a gathering of Indian-Americans in Herndon, a Virginia suburb of Washington DC on 9 September, Gandhi had said, "First of all, you have to understand what the fight is about. The fight is not about politics. That is superficial." —*PTI*

FARMERS TARGETED

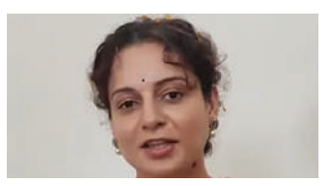
Cong attacks Kangana, BJP keeps distances from controversy

NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

Congress on Wednesday stepped up its attack on BJP over its MP Kangana Ranaut's remarks calling for bringing back the three farm laws with Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi demanding that Prime Minister Narendra Modi must clarify whether he is opposed to the comments or is "upto some mischief".

The Opposition party demanded that the actor-politician be expelled by the ruling party if it does not agree with her remarks.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge also hit out at BJP over Ranaut's remarks and said the poll-bound states, including Haryana, would give a befitting reply to the ruling party.



Kangana Ranaut *PHOTO: PTI*

Ranaut on Wednesday withdrew her remarks calling for bringing back the three farm laws and said those were her personal opinions and did not represent the party's stand.

The actor-politician said she must remember that she is not only an artiste but also a BJP member now and her statements should be in line with her party's policies.

Congress on Tuesday shared on X a video in which Ranaut said in Hindi, "Farm laws that have been repealed should be brought back. I think this may get controversial. The laws in farmers' interest be brought back. Farmers should themselves demand this (to bring farm laws back) so that there is no hindrance. —*PTI*

KANGANA'S WAGGING TONGUE

- Ranaut's latest film 'Emergency' is stuck with Censor Board. She is portraying ex-PM Indira Gandhi
- **November 2021:** At an event, Kangana said India attained "real freedom" in 2014, when Modi government came to power and Independence was 'bheek' or alms
- **May 2021:** X suspended Ranaut's account for 'repeated violations' of its hateful conduct and abusive behaviour policies
- **November 2020:** Screenwriter Javed Akhtar sued her for defaming him in actor Sushant Singh Rajput's deaths
- **September 2020:** She compared Mumbai to Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK) and criticised Mumbai Police.
- **August 2020:** Ranaut courted trouble over her claim that 99% of people in Bollywood consume drugs

PHOTO: PTI

Banners targeting 'illegal' B'deshi's in Thane; FIR filed

THANE, 25 SEPT

Police have registered two cases after banners targeting "illegal" immigrants belonging to a particular community from Bangladesh were put up in two villages in Maharashtra's Thane district, an official said on Wednesday. The banners, found at the entrance of two villages near Bhiwandi, warned "illegal" im-migrants from the neighbouring nation against entering the area and asked house owners to share de-tails of such individuals living as tenants in their properties, the official said. Police are yet to ascertain who put up the banners, he said. The Kongaon and Narpoli police stations have registered FIRs under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita sections 223, (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) and 299 (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its reli-gion or religious beliefs) and the Maharashtra Prevention of Defacement of Property Act. *—PTI*

Dancing videos of PM, Gandhi go viral; case filed

BALLIA, 25 SEPT

An FIR has been registered against unidentified persons for allegedly posting an "objectionable" video of Mahatma Gandhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on social media. The matter was highlighted by Neha Singh Rathore from her X account @ imrowdy_rathore on Tuesday. "The popular and successful Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath Ji Maharaj has made many efforts for the honour and security and empowerment of women of his state. How some cheap street reelers are using Yogi Ji for a few views. Not only this, how the videos of Prime Minister and Mahatma Gandhi are being edited and uploaded for cheap popularity," Rathore, who wrote himself as a nationalist social activist said. *—PTI*

Minor boy killed in leopard attack in Pune

PUNE, 25 SEPT

A nine-year-old boy was killed after a leopard attacked him in Maharashtra's Pune district in the wee hours of Wednesday, forest officials said. The incident took place when the boy went to answer nature's call at a farm near his house at Tejiwadi in Junnar tehsil. The boy's grandfather was also around, the offi-cials said. "It seems that when the boy went to answer nature's call, he was attacked by a leopard that had come from the sugarcane farms nearby. The feline took the boy inside the farms," Deputy Conserva-tion of Forest, Junnar range, Amol Satpute said. *—PTI*

Kerala actor Idavela Babu held in rape case, released

This is the second arrest of an actor following Hema report

KOCHI, 25 SEPT

Malayalam actor Idavela Babu was arrested on Wednesday in connection with a case involving the alleged sexual assault of a female actor.

However, due to the anticipatory bail granted by the court earlier, he was released on bail after the medical examination, police said.

This is the second arrest of an actor by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing cases of sexual abuse of women in the Malayalam film industry, following the release of portions of the Justice Hema Committee report, which investigated such issues.

Earlier in the day, Babu appeared before the SIT in Kochi for questioning. The interrogation commenced around 10 am, and his arrest was recorded at around 1 pm.

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

A case was registered against Babu on 28 August. According to the complaint, the actress alleged that Babu had called her to discuss her application for membership in the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA).

Meanwhile, the woman who filed a sexual assault complaint against seven including actors Mukesh, Jayasurya, Babu and ManiyanPillai Raju has approached the Kerala High Court seeking anticipatory bail in a POCSO case.

In her petition, she appealed to the court to restrict the probe team from arresting her until settling the bail plea. Claiming innocence, she argued that she would cooperate with the probe.

Actor Sidhique on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court challenging the Kerala High Court order denying him anticipatory bail in a rape case. According to the Supreme Court website, Sidhique has moved the apex court through her counsel Ranjeeta Rohatgi. In another case, a day after the arrest of CPI(M) MLA M Mukesh in a rape case, Marxist leader PK Sreemathi said that it's up to the actor-turned-politician to decide whether to resign, emphasising that such decisions stem from ethics and propriety. *—PTI*

'India exporting military hardware to 90 nations'

NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

India's defence production has clocked an all-time high of Rs 1.27 lakh crore in terms of value in 2023-24 and it is now exporting weapons and military hardware to more than 90 friendly countries, Defence Min-ister Rajnath Singh said on Wednesday.

Indian armed forces are now using weapons and platforms manufactured on Indian soil and the country is rising on the global defence industrial landscape, the minister said on X on the 10th anniversary of the NDA government's 'Make in India' programme.

The government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "astute leadership" introduced the 'Make in In-dia' programme with a vision to make the country self-reliant in every domain, Singh said.

In the last few years, the government has taken a series of measures to promote the

PHOTO: PTI

domestic defence industry.

The focus has been to boost domestic defence manufacturing and bolster military preparedness espe-cially in areas along the border with China.

India's defence exports crossed the Rs 21,000 crore mark for the first time in 2023-24 and the defence ministry has set a target of increasing it to Rs 50,000 crore in the next five years. India is one of the largest importers of arms globally. According to estimates, Indian armed forces are projected to spend around USD 130 billion in capital procurement by 2029. *—PTI*

EY EMPLOYEE'S DEATH

EY's Pune office lacked labour welfare permit

PUNE, 25 SEPT

PHOTO: LINKEDIN

The Pune office of Ernst & Young (EY), in news after the death of a woman CA, was functioning since 2007 without a license under the Shops Act, which stipulates employees' welfare among other con-di-tions, an official said on Wednesday.

This is a violation of norms. A notice will be issued to the firm and based on its response, further action will be initiated, the official from the Maharashtra labour department said.

The Shops and Establishments Act regulates all type of business operations, including the well-being of employees and protects the employees' rights while also ensuring their health and financial security.

A Maharashtra labour department official inspected the EY office here on Monday on the directions of the central government over the death of chartered accountant (CA) Anna Sebastian Perayil.

The 26-year-old woman allegedly died due to work stress in July, four months into joining the firm in Pu-ne.

Following her death, Sebastian's mother wrote to EY India chairman Rajiv Memani alleging that the workload and extended working hours took a toll on her daughter.

The firm, however, denied the allegations.

Additional labour commissioner Shailendra Pol on Wednesday said an inspection at the EY's office here was carried out under eight to nine legal provisions pertaining to the Shops and Establishments Act, min-imum wages, maternity benefits, payment of wages and overtime wages.

Not obtaining the Shops Act license is a clear-cut breach and violation (of norms), Pol said.

Union Minister for Labour Mansukh Mandaviya recently said the death of Sebastian was being investi-gated.

Meanwhile, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor met with the parents of the deceased on Wednesday. Tharoor said he discussed with the parents the need for an enquiry, accountability, and the implementation of new laws and regulations to address the toxic work culture. *—PTI*

ANOTHER RAIL INCIDENT

Train halted as it hits old iron piece on track; sabotage suspected

BOTAD, 25 SEPT

- The incident took place after three railway employees were arrested in Surat for track tampering, alerting about a "sabotage attempt" to take credit for the aversion

A passenger train was halted after it hit an old iron piece of rail placed vertically in the middle of a track by someone in a suspected sabotage attempt in Gujarat's Botad early on Wednesday, police said.

Nobody was injured in the incident, they said.

"The Okha-Bhavnagar passenger train (19210) passing through Ranpur police station limits in Botad dis-trict hit a four feet-long piece of old rail placed on the track next to cement sleepers around 3 am," Su-perintendent of Police, Botad, Kishor Baloliya, said.

"The train hit the piece of iron rail placed in a standing position in the middle of the track, following which it was halted there for several hours. The local police personnel were informed around 7.30 am, which reached the spot and launched an investigation," he said.

The incident occurred around two km from Kundli railway station, he said.

The incident took place after three railway employees were arrested on Monday in Surat district for al-leged track tampering and alerting authorities about a "sabotage attempt" to take credit for averting a possible tragedy.

They indulged in the act to ensure they would be felicitated and be deployed on night duty further, which would give them time to spend with the family during the day, officials said. *—PTI*

According to the officials none was injured in the incident PHOTO: PTI

DRILLS ON

Tanzania Peoples Defence Force (TPDF) personnel take part in a 12-week technical and tactical training programme conducted at the Mechanised Infantry Centre & School (MIC&S), in Ahmednagar, Maharashtra PHOTO: PTI

Krishna Janmabhumi-Shahi Idgah dispute: HC to hear matter on 30 Sept

PRAYAGRAJ, 25 SEPT

The Allahabad High Court on Wednesday fixed September 30 as the next date for hearing in the Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Idgah dispute at Mathura.

The Hindu side had moved an application for amendment in its petition, following which the next hearing was fixed.

Justice Mayank Kumar Jain is hearing 18 suits which are consolidated.

On 1 August, the plea was rejected challenging the maintainability of 18 cases related to the temple-mosque dispute in Mathura, and ruled that the "religious character" of Shahi Idgah needs to be determined.

The Hindu side had moved an application for amendment in its petition, following which the next hearing was fixed PHOTO: PTI

The cases filed by the Hindu side seek the "removal" of the Aurangzeb-era mosque they claim was built after demolishing a temple that once stood there. *—PTI*

PEOPLE FACING PROBLEMS DUE TO SHAMBU BORDER CLOSURE: KHATTAR

AMBALA, 25 SEPT

Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar has said the closure of the Shambhu border is a "big problem" for traders and locals alike as he lashed out at protestors sitting on the Punjab side of the state's border, claiming they are wearing masks of farmers who want to destabilise elected governments.

"The big problem is the closure of (Shambu) border. The common people, especially traders, are facing problems due to its closure," Khattar, who is MP from Karnal, said.

"We had plans to open the border…but those sitting across are not farmers, but wearing mask of farm-ers, few such people who want to damage the system, destabilise the established governments, they are such people," he alleged.

"Don't have to go into details, you also know who they are," Khattar said. As Ambala city is close to Shambu border, Ambala is facing the brunt and people face difficulties, he said.

Farmers under the banner of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha are spearheading the 'Delhi Chalo' march to press the government on a legal guarantee for MSP for crops. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

MUMBAI'S FIRST

Mumbai is going to get its first underground metro, the Metro 3 Project, which will be partially inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in October. It will run between Mumbai's Aarey Colony and Bandra Kurla Complex with 10 stations operational on this section PHOTO: X

Smoke from Dubai-Chennai flight, Emirates apologises

NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

Emirates Airlines apologized for the inconvenience caused to passengers after smoke started coming from the engine compartment of a Dubai-bound flight at Chennai Airport on Tuesday.

Responding to the situation, an Emirates spokesperson said, "Emirates flight EK547 from Chennai to Du-bai on 24 September was delayed due to a technical fault. Following an engineering inspection, the air-craft was cleared to proceed to Dubai. Emirates apologizes for the inconvenience caused. The safety of our passengers and crew is of the utmost importance."

According to officials, smoke was detected from the tail of Flight EK547 during refuelling at 9.40pm on Tuesday has caused panic.

"Ground staff alerted pilots, who shut down engines to prevent escalation. And fire engines rushed to the site to prevent any untoward situation. The situation was brought under control. In between, all pas-sengers were deplaned for safety inspection," said an airport official.

PHOTO: X/ @FlightModeblog

A team of engineers inspected the Airport for safety clearance and it was cleared for take-off later. *—ANI*

SURPASSES JAPAN

India is 3rd largest power in Asia power index

NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

India surpassed Japan to become the third-largest power in the Asia Power Index, according to an official statement by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on Wednesday.

The ministry highlighted that this achievement is driven by India's dynamic growth, youthful population, and expanding economy, solidifying its position as a leading force in the region. It also reflects country's increasing geopolitical stature.

"In a major shift, India surpassed Japan to become the third-largest power in the Asia Power Index, reflecting its increasing geopolitical stature" said the ministry.

The ministry highlighted that this achievement is driven by India's dynamic growth, youthful population PHOTO: PTI

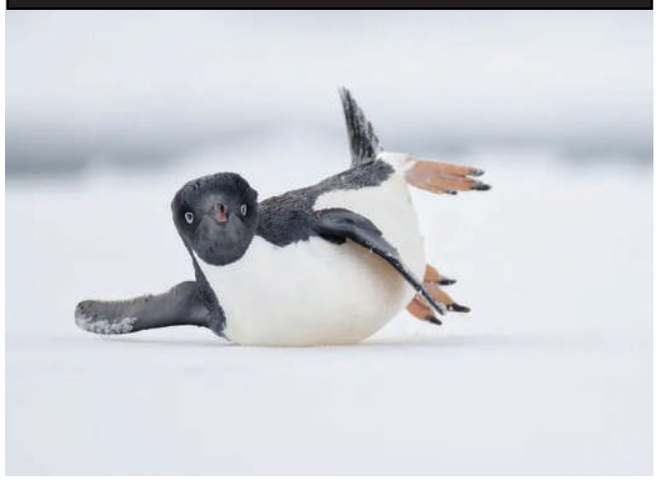
The Asia Power Index, launched by the Lowy Institute in 2018, is an annual measure of power dynamics in the Asia-Pacific region. It evaluates 27 countries across the Asia-Pacific, examining their ability to shape and respond to the external environment.

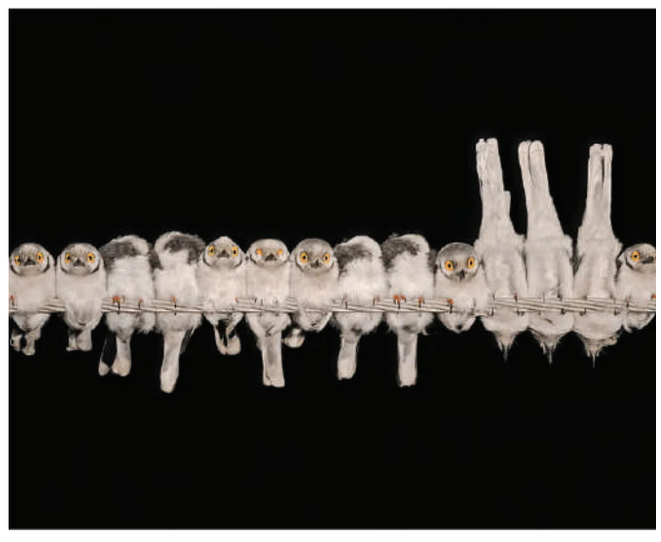
As per the ministry, one of the most significant findings in the 2024 Asia Power Index is India's steady rise in the regional power rankings. Witnessing a gradual rise, India is looking to achieve its full potential and exercise its influence in the region.

The key factors behind India's rise is the economic growth, ministry says that the country has shown remarkable post-pandemic economic recovery, contributing to a 4.2-point rise in its Economic Capability.

The index also highlighted India's increasing role in multilateral diplomacy and regional security. India's leadership in the Quad and participation in various regional dialogues have allowed it to exert influence in security matters without formal military alliances. *—ANI*

THROUGH THE LENS





The results of annual Bird Photographer of the Year competition are in. An Adélie penguin glides across the sea ice near Brown Bluff, Antarctica; Volunteers help a family of goosanders cross the road in Poland; A group of white-crested helmetshrikes prepare to sleep in South Africa

PHOTOS: NADIA HAQ / GRZEGORZ DŁUGOSZ/ GARY COLLYER

Poll campaign or demolition, bulldozers a tool in Haryana

The Once just an innocuous piece of construction equipment and today a symbol of state power and politics, bulldozers are visible everywhere as campaigning hots up in Nuh. Not as a demolition tool but festooned, prettied up and embraced by all parties.

Young people sitting on dozer blades, dancing and showering petals on crowds gathered on the narrow streets below are a common sight. Bulldozers may have earned a bad name but clearly not in this Haryana constituency, counted among the most backward in the country, where they are being used to further the festive election mood.

The scene was very different just over a year ago when five people were killed in communal violence in the Muslim dominated constituency. The violence later spread to adjoining Gurugram where a cleric was killed in an attack on a mosque.

Following the violence, the BJP-led Haryana government went on a demolition drive in Nuh, drawing allegations of "ethnic cleansing". Then chief minister M L Khattar stoutly denied the charges.

As terms like "bulldozer justice", "bulldozer politics" or simply "bulldozing your way through" find their way into the discourse, both the Congress and the BJP are using the machine on wheels extensively this election.

"The use of bulldozers in the poll campaign is to signify that any unscrupulous elements that try to disturb communal harmony in the district will face action. We believe outsiders were behind the violence which took place last year and then local residents are painted in bad light," a Congress worker told PTI on condition of anonymity.

His party colleague added that the use of bulldozers does not mean the party, fighting to wrest power from the BJP, stands for the action that destroyed houses or livelihoods of many during the demolition drive last year but just for a message of harmony. "Plus bulldozers are crowd pullers," he said.

Bulldozers being used during poll campaign ahead of the Haryana Assembly elections ***PHOTO: PTI***

"The bulldozer action happened last year only on illegal buildings and their usage in poll campaigns should not be seen in negative light. Just like other means of transport are used in poll campaigns, bulldozers are also being used. They attract more crowds.

It's an all male show though with women watching the "bulldozer acts" from the confines of their homes, their faces often veiled as they watch the campaigning through half shuttered windows.

Sultana, who was watching a poll rally in Kanwarsika village here from behind the grills of a window, said, "It is still not very common for women to attend poll rallies. The only way we would know about the campaign is through the loudspeakers. So if there is something interesting happening like this (bulldozers), we watch from the window."

Nuh, which was established as a separate district in 2005, from parts of Gurgaon and Faridabad has three assembly constituencies---Nuh, Fereozepur Jhirka and Punhana.

Congress's Aftab Ahmed is seeking re-election as MLA from Nuh constituency. He is also deputy leader of opposition in the outgoing Haryana Assembly. He is pitted against BJP's Sanjay Singh and INLD's Tahir Hussain.

Tahir is the son of Zakir Hussain, a three time MLA from the constituency and chairperson of the Haryana Waqf board. He recently joined the INLD. Singh is the incumbent MLA from Sohna constituency, 30 km from Nuh.

The BJP has never won from Nuh and the voters here have historically supported Congress and INLD.

Nuh is the only constituency in the Muslim dominated district where BJP has not fielded a Muslim candidate.

As the politics plays out, bulldozer owners are enjoying the spotlight and the fact that their machines are so much in demand - and not just for controversial demolition drives.

Salim, a contractor who owns two bulldozers in Nuh, said his machines are booked whenever there is a campaign in the district.

His friend Illiyas added that many families in the district prefer owning bulldozers over cars because it generates more income.

Locals in Nuh - which has been identified as both economically and educationally backward - have been demanding improved infrastructure and the setting up of a university. Besides, chronic water shortages, dilapidated infrastructure, lack of healthcare facilities, and a high unemployment rate dominate the concerns of voters in district.

Bulldozers first entered the poll lexicon in Uttar Pradesh, with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath seeing in them an affirmation of both his government's "tough on criminals" and "high on development" .

The Haryana assembly polls are slated to be held on 5 October. *—PTI*

SALAR ساہر

Kashmir's saffron now faces global warming threat

In Kashmir Valley, saffron has long been more than just a crop; it is a symbol of heritage and a vital source of income for local farmers. But its farming is grappling with significant sustainability and livelihood issues, highlighting the urgent need for suitable technologies to combat global warming.

As global temperatures rise, the very foundations of this traditional cultivation industry are under siege. Erratic weather patterns, unseasonable warmth, and diminishing snowfall have disrupted the delicate balance required for saffron cultivation.

Farmers who have invested their lives in this aromatic harvest are now facing uncertainty and declining yields, jeopardizing their livelihoods and the cultural legacy of saffron production.

Saffron production, which once reached nearly 17 tons annually, has now stabilized at around 15 tons.

However, the technology and research being done by the Advanced Research Centre for Saffron and Seed Spices in the Pampore district of Jammu and Kashmir-- the only Saffron research centre in India-- is continuously engaged in increasing the production of the crop.

"Due to changing weather patterns, the research centre has developed an irrigation schedule for saffron farmers. This schedule, detailing when and how much irrigation the crop requires, has been shared with the Department of Agriculture. The research centre has provided comprehensive guidance covering all aspects of saffron cultivation, from land preparation and seed sowing to intercultural operations, harvesting, and post-harvest management, which is now accessible to our farmers," Bashir Ahmad Ilahi, Professor in Head Saffron Research Station, Pampore, told ANI.

Farmers during harvesting of saffron flowers at a field in Pampore Kashmir ***PHOTO: ANI***

He said that saffron seeds are ideally sown in late July, with the crucial condition that the soil remains moist but not waterlogged.

This delicate spice, revered for its rich flavour and vibrant colour, flourishes in the unique climate of the region, cultivated across 3,500 hectares by generations of dedicated growers.

Abdul Majeed Wani, a Saffron grower, told ANI that his family has been engaged in saffron farming for decades, particularly in the Pampore area of Kashmir.

He said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally promoted GI-tagged saffron, ensuring customers receive authentic saffron thanks to this certification.

Wani said that the world's best saffron is produced in Pampore, where prices range from 1.10 lakh to 1.25 lakh per kilogram.

"Global warming has contributed to a decline in saffron crops, with untimely rainfall adversely affecting production. Previously, annual yields ranged from 15 to 17 tons, but this has decreased in recent years. Fortunately, last year saw timely rainfall, allowing the crop to recover to previous levels. This year, the rain has arrived on time once again, and we remain hopeful that the crop will be plentiful," he added.

Vaibhav, a customer from Dwarka in Delhi, told ANI that he is in Pampore to purchase saffron and Kashmir's renowned honey.

Saffron is mentioned in the 5th century B.C. in Kashmiri records and is still part of the agricultural economy. Integrated in annual crop system, Saffron is also a cash crop. With respect to occupation, only one per cent of saffron growers are dependent on any other agriculture.

Saffron is part of the cultural heritage of the region, associated with the famous Kashmiri cuisine, its medicinal values and the rich cultural heritage of Kashmir.

As the crisis unfolds, the farmers of Kashmir stand at a crossroads, seeking solutions to adapt and survive in a warming world while holding onto their cherished saffron heritage.

The fight to preserve this precious crop symbolizes a broader struggle against climate change. *—ANI*

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

How will SL's new Marxist-leader tackle economy, IMF loans?

Sri Lankans voted for a new direction in leadership on 22 September, 2024, electing a leftist anti-poverty campaigner as president of the South Asian nation.

The ascent of Anura Kumara Dissanayake marks a break with the past and from the establishment parties and politicians blamed for taking the country to the brink of economic collapse in 2022.

Dissanayake characterized the victory as a "fresh start" for Sri Lanka – but he will nonetheless need to address the economic baggage left by his predecessors and the impact of an International Monetary Fund loan that came with painful austerity demands. The Conversation turned to Vidhura S. Tennekoon, an expert on Sri Lanka's economy at Indiana University, to explain the task facing the new president – and how intends to tackle it.

What do we know about Sri Lanka's new president?

Anura Kumara Dissanayake leads both the National People's Power alliance, or NPP, and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, or JVP. Rooted in Marxist ideology, the JVP was founded in the 1960s with the aim of seizing power through a socialist revolution. But after two failed armed uprisings in 1971 and 1987-89 – which resulted in the loss of tens of thousands of lives – the party shifted toward democratic politics and has remained so for over three decades.

Until this election, the JVP remained a minor third party in Sri Lanka's political landscape, while power alternated between the alliances led by the two traditional political parties – the United National Party and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party – or their descendant parties.

What kind of economy is Dissanayake inheriting?

Two and a half years ago, Sri Lanka experienced the worst economic crisis in its history. With foreign reserves nearly depleted, the country struggled to pay its bills, leading to severe shortages of essential goods. People waited in long lines for cooking gas and fuel, while regular blackouts became part of daily life.

Sri Lankan rupee plummeted to a record low, driving inflation to 70 per cent. The economy was contracting, and the country defaulted on its international sovereign bonds for the first time.

This sparked a massive protest movement that ultimately forced President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to resign. In July 2022, Parliament appointed Ranil Wickremesinghe to complete the remainder of Rajapaksa's term.

Sri Lanka's President Anura Kumara Dissanayake during a meeting, in Colombo, Sri Lanka ***PHOTO: PTI***

The government successfully restructured its domestic debt, followed by a restructuring of its bilateral debt – that is, government-to-government loans, mostly from China but also from India and Western counties, including the United States.

Just days before the election, an agreement was reached with international bondholders to restructure the remaining sovereign debt.

Dissanayake now inherits an economy that, while more stable, remains vulnerable. He will have limited room to maneuver away from the carefully planned economic path laid out by his predecessor, even as voters expect him to fulfil popular demands.

How does Dissanayake plan to improve Sri Lanka's economy?

As a leader from a Marxist party, Dissanayake will likely pursue policies to reflect collective decisions made by the politburos and central committees of the NPP and JVP, rather than his individual views. He advocates for an economic system where activities are coordinated through a central government plan, emphasizing the importance of "economic democracy".

His party believes prosperity should be measured not just by economic growth but by the overall quality of life. They argue that people need more than just basic necessities — they require secure housing, food, health care, education, access to technology and leisure.

Where is Sri Lanka?

Home to 22 million people, the nation of Sri Lanka is located off the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent

Dissanayake's long-term vision is to transform Sri Lanka into a production-based economy, focusing on sectors like manufacturing, agriculture and information technology rather than service industries. One of the key policies is to promote local production of all viable food products to reduce reliance on imports. To support these activities, the NPP plans to establish a development bank. Additionally, they NPP proposes increasing government spending on education and health care, in line with Sri Lanka's tradition of providing free, universal access to both.

Where does this leave the IMF loans?

Historically, Dissanayake's party has been critical of the IMF and its policy recommendations. Given the severity of Sri Lanka's economic crisis, Dissanayake has acknowledged the need to stay within the IMF program for now. But he has vowed to renegotiate with the IMF to make the programme more "people-friendly".

Dissanayake's proposals include raising the personal income tax exemption threshold to double its current level and removing taxes on essential goods.

However, the IMF programme requires Sri Lanka to maintain a primary budget surplus of at least 2.3 per cent of gross domestic product to ensure debt sustainability. His strategy is to improve the efficiency of tax collection, which he believes will generate enough revenue to fund his policies. *—PTI*

Singapore's population crosses 6 million mark

SINGAPORE, 25 SEPT

Singapore's population has reached a record high of 6.04 million, rising two per cent from last year, as the manpower-constrained city-state took in more foreign workers, according to an official report. The figure was released on Tuesday by the Prime Minister's Office in the annual Population in Brief re-port by the National Population and Talent Division. The population figure has crossed the six million mark for the first time in Singapore's history. Of the 6.04 million people in the city-state as of June 2024, there were 4.18 million residents and about 1.86 million non-residents, which comprise the for-eign workforce, migrant domestic workers, dependants and international students. According to the report, the non-resident population jumped by about 5 per cent from last year. The increase was seen across most 'work pass' types, with work permit holders contributing most to the rise (44 per cent of the non-resident population), followed by migrant domestic workers (15 per cent of the non-resident population). *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

China test-fires ICBM into Pacific Ocean

BEIJING, 25 SEPT

The Chinese military on Wednesday test-fired an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) with a dummy warhead in the Pacific Ocean, the Defence Ministry announced. The launch tested weaponry perfor-mance and military training effectiveness and achieved desired goals, the ministry said in a statement. The missile fell into expected sea areas, the statement said, adding this was a routine arrangement in the annual training plan and relevant countries had been notified in advance. It is the first time in 44 years that China is known to have successfully conducted an atmospheric test of an ICBM over the high seas. In May 1980, a DF-5- China's first ICBM- flew more than 9,000 kilometres, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported. *—PTI*

UAE: 4 soldiers killed in accident while on duty

8DUBAI, 25 SEPT

The United Arab Emirates announced on Wednesday that four soldiers were killed and nine others in-jured in an accident. The UAE's state-run WAM news agency carried a military statement that offered no other immediate details, simply calling the incident Tuesday night "an accident ... while they were carrying out their duty in the country". The Emirates, home to Abu Dhabi and Dubai, has one of the strongest militaries of the Gulf Arab nations. *—PTI*

Finland zoo will return its giant pandas to China

HELSINKI, 25 SEPT

A zoo in Finland is returning a pair of giant pandas to China as financial hardship and rising inflation is making it difficult to keep them. Lumi and Pyry are leaving Finland about eight years ahead of schedule. The pandas arrived in the Scandinavian country in January 2018 under an agreement with the Chinese government following a state visit by president Xi Jinping and were supposed to remain for 15 years. Pyry is a male panda originally named Hua Bao and Lumi is a female called Jin Bao Bao back in China. The Ahtari Zoo hoped the pandas would attract more visitors to its central location but that has not happened. As a result, the zoo has accumulated significant debt since the Covid pandemic. ***—Courtesy, The Independent***

The Israel Defence said that they have killed 40 Hamas members killed on Wednesday *PHOTO: X*

Hezbollah fires missile at Mossad HQ near Tel Aviv

It is the 1st missile fired toward Tel Aviv

TEL AVIV, 25 SEPT

Hezbollah has fired a ballistic missile targeting Mossad's headquarters near Tel Aviv, the Lebanon-based group said.

Warning sirens sounded in Tel Aviv on Wednesday as a surface-to-surface missile was intercepted by Israeli air defence systems after it was detected crossing from Lebanon, the Israeli military said. Hezbollah said that the building targeted was where the Israeli intelligence agency planned the recent attacks using pagers and other wireless devices. The launch came amid Israel's bombardment of Leba-non, which has killed at least 500 people and forced tens of thousands to flee.

It is the first time that the Iran-backed armed group has claimed a ballistic missile strike since October when hostilities with Israel were triggered by the war on Gaza. "The Islamic Resistance launched a 'Qader 1' ballistic missile at 6.30 am on Wednesday," Hezbollah said.

The group added that the strike was carried out in support of the people of Gaza and "in defence of Lebanon and its people". Hezbollah launched a missile at Tel Aviv early Wednesday in its deepest strike yet into Israel, marking a further escalation after Israeli strikes on Lebanon killed hundreds of people.

The Israeli military said it intercepted the surface-to-surface missile, which set off air raid sirens in Tel Aviv and across central Israel, and there were no reports of casualties or damage.

The Israel Defence said that they have killed 40 Hamas members killed.

Beirut hospital system could collapse: Officials

Fears are mounting that Beirut's medical facilities may collapse as it deals with the huge numbers of civilians injured in this week's Israeli bombing campaign. Hospitals in the city had already been strug-gling to cope in the wake of the pager attacks last week.

"If it continues with this intensity," Colin Lee, an experienced NGO worker in Lebanon who is now Di-rector of Programme Operations at Goal Global, said to The Journal. "There's no bed space, they don't have the stockpiles of blood or anything really in place." Report from the Lebanese capital yes-terday showed that thousands of civilians were flooding from Hezbollah strongholds like south Leba-non and the Beqaa Valley towards Beirut to safety.

—Courtesy, The Journal/ Al Jazeera/ PTI

Ibrahim Qubaisi *PHOTO: X*

Top leader killed amid shelling, says Hezbollah

Lebanon's armed group Hezbollah has announced the death of one of its top commanders amid Isra-el's intense bombardment of the country. Hezbollah confirmed that Ibrahim Muhammad Qubaisi had been killed in a post on Telegram early on Wednesday, hours after the Israeli military said he had been "eliminated" in an air strike on Ghobeiri in Beirut's southern suburbs.

Israeli officials said that Qubaisi, also known as "Hajj Abu Musa", led a num-ber of Hezbollah's missile and rocket units and had been responsible for a 2,000 attack in which three Israeli soldiers were kidnapped and killed. *—Al Jazeera*

Tropical storm lashes Florida, Mexico

WASHINGTON, 25 SEPT

Tropical Storm Helene was rapidly strengthening in the Caribbean Sea and expected to become a hurri-cane Wednesday while moving north along Mexico's coast toward the US, prompting residents to evacuate, schools to close and officials to declare emergencies in Florida and Georgia.

The storm is forecast to be "near hurricane strength" when it passes near Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula early Wednesday, the US National Hurricane Centre said, and to "intensify and grow in size" as it moves north across the Gulf of Mexico.

Heavy rainfall was forecast for the southeastern US. Helene is expected to become a major hurricane — a Category 3 or higher — on Thursday, the day it's set to reach Florida's Gulf Coast, according to the hurricane centre.

PHOTO: X

The centre has issued hurricane warnings for part of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula and Florida's north-western coastline, where large storm surges of up to 15 feet were expected.

Europe's deadly floods offer glimpse of future climate

Human-caused climate change doubled the likelihood and intensified the heavy rains that led to devas-tating flooding in Central Europe earlier this month, a new flash study found.

The World Weather Attribution study also warned that in a world with even more warming — specifically 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming since preindustrial times, the likelihood of ferocious four-day storms would grow by 50% compared to current levels. Such storms would grow in intensity, too, the authors found.

—PTI/ AP

US ELECTION 2024

Shots fired at Kamala Harris' campaign office

TEMPE, 25 SEPT

Police are investigating what appears to be gunfire damage overnight at a Democratic Party-coordinated campaign office for Vice President Kamala Harris.

The incident occurred just a few days before Harris is scheduled to visit Arizona as she campaigns for president. "We can confirm that on 9/23/24, what appears to be damage from gunfire at ... a DNC Campaign Office, was discovered," Tempe police said in a statement to NBC News on Tuesday.

Tempe police said that officers responded Monday after calls from workers, and that they observed what appeared to be gunshots through the front windows of the office which is shared by staff mem-bers for the Arizona Democratic Party, the Harris campaign and Senate and House campaigns to boost turnout for the party in November.

"No one was inside the office during the overnight hours, but this raises concerns about the safety of those who work in that building, as well as those nearby," Public Information Officer, Sgt. Ryan Cook said in a statement Tuesday.

NBC affiliate KPNX of Phoenix previously reported that the office had been damaged by gunfire and captured video from the crime scene that showed gunshots through the windows. *—NBC News*

Vice President Kamala Harris *PHOTO: PTI*

Trump shooting suspect Routh charged

A man who authorities say staked out Donald Trump for 12 hours on his golf course in Florida and wrote of his desire to kill him was indicted Tuesday on an attempted assassination charge. Ryan Wesley Routh had been initially charged with two federal firearms offenses. The upgraded charg-es contained in a five-count indictment reflect the Justice Department's assessment. *—PTI*

Trump may face Iran assassination bid

WASHINGTON, 25 SEPT

US intelligence agencies have briefed former president Donald Trump on the "real and specific" threat to his life allegedly from Iran to allegedly "sow chaos" in the country, according to his campaign.

Two apparent assassination attempts have been made in the same number of months on the life of the 78-year-old Republican presidential candidate.

"President Trump was briefed earlier today by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence re-garding real and specific threats from Iran to assassinate him in an effort to destabilise and sow chaos in the United States," Steven Cheung, Trump's Campaign communications director said.

"Make no mistake, the terror regime in Iran loves the weakness of Kamala Harris and is terrified of the strength and resolve of President Trump. He will let nothing stop him or get in his way to fight for the American people and to Make America Great Again," he said. *—PTI*

Russia can only be forced into peace: Zelenskyy at UN

KYIV, 25 SEPT

The victory plan that President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will present to the White House this week asks the Biden administration to do something it has not achieved in the two and a half years since Russia in-vaded Ukraine: act quickly to support Kyiv's campaign.

While Western dawdling has amplified Ukraine's losses, some Ukrainian officials, diplomats and ana-lysts fear Kyiv's aim to have the plan implemented before a new US president takes office in January may be out of reach. US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield, reportedly briefed on the plan, said it "can work" but many privately question how.

The specifics of Zelenskyy's blueprint have been kept under wraps until it can be formally presented to President Joe Biden, but contours of the plan have emerged, including the need for fast action on deci-sions Western allies have been mulling since the full-scale invasion began in 2022.

It includes the security guarantee of NATO membership, according to Zelenskyy's chief of staff Andrii Yermak — a principal demand of Kyiv and Moscow's key point of contention. Western allies, including the US, have been sceptical about this option.

Zelenskyy has said he will also seek permission to use long-range weapons to strike deep inside Russian territory, another red line for some of Ukraine's supporters. *—PTI*

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the Scranton Army Plant, while signing military ordnance in Scranton, Pa on Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

"We have to prepare the second peace summit to end the war altogether. And I invite all nations to join us in this process, all who respect the UN Charter. We invite China. I have already invited India

-Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine President

EFFECTIVE FROM JANUARY

Thailand legalises same-sex marriage

BANGKOK, 25 SEPT

Thailand's landmark marriage equality bill was officially written into law on Tuesday, allowing same-sex couples to legally wed.

The law was published in the Royal Gazette after endorsement by King Maha Vajiralongkorn, and will come into effect in 120 days. This means LGBTQ+ couples will be able to register their marriage in Jan-uary next year, making Thailand the third place in Asia, after Taiwan and Nepal, to allow same-sex marriage.

The bill, which grants full legal, financial and medical rights for marriage partners of any gender, sailed through both the House of Representatives and the Senate in April and June respectively.

"Congratulations to everyone's love," Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra wrote on X, adding the hashtag #Love Wins.

Thailand has a reputation for acceptance and inclusivity but struggled for decades to pass a marriage equality law. Thai society largely holds conservative values, and members of the LGBTQ+ community say they face discrimination in everyday life. The government and state agencies are also historically conservative, and advocates for gender equality had a hard time pushing lawmakers and civil servants to accept change.

The bill grants full legal, financial and medical rights for marriage partners of any gender, gets nod from both the house *PHOTO: X@MSNARAWIN*

- Bangkok Deputy Governor Sanon Wangsrangboon said last week that the city officials will be ready to register same-sex marriages as soon as the law gets enacted

Bangkok Deputy Governor Sanon Wangsrangboon said last week that the city officials will be ready to register same-sex marriages as soon as the law gets enacted. The legislation amended the country's Civil and Commercial Code to replace gender-specific words such as "men and women" with gender-neutral words such as "individual".

The government led by the Pheu Thai party has made marriage equality one of its main goals. It made a major effort to identify itself with the annual Bangkok Pride parade in June, in which thousands of peo-ple celebrated in one of Bangkok's busiest commercial districts. *—AP*

NOT DATING MELONI, SAYS MUSK

A viral photo of Elon Musk and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni sparked dating rumours. However, he was quick to deny this with a "not dating" post on X. A mushy photo of the duo at an award event had netizens calling them the "perfect couple". The rumour mill started after Musk said it was an honour to give an award to "someone who is even more beautiful on the inside than she was on the outside."

FIRST RUBY FROM LAB

PHOTO: BBC

A university lecturer in England has successfully grown a full-size ruby as it sits in platinum jewellery setting in what is believed to be a first of its kind process in the world. It enables a tiny fragment of real ruby to multiply as it sits in its jewellery setting. Unlike gems grown from scratch, these gems grow in a furnace from pieces of waste gem material and takes only days & only 5 hours of energy to be developed .

Diamond polishing industry revenue to decline: Crisil

KOLKATA, 25 SEPT

India's natural diamond polishing industry is poised to see a decline in revenue to a decadal low of around USD 12 billion during the current financial year, according to research firm Crisil Ratings. The research firm said that the decline in revenues will be mainly on account of three reasons - muted demand in key export markets of the US and China, a fall in prices due to oversupply and shifts in consumer preference towards lab-grown diamonds due to affordability and high resemblance to the natural ones. It said the revenues of the natural diamond polishing industry will decline for third fiscal in a row. Being a buyers' market due to tepid demand and decreasing prices, polishers are limiting their purchases of rough diamonds. According to Crisil Ratings, sluggish demand in the US market caused a fall in India's diamond exports, while there is a growing preference for golden jewellery in China as the yellow metal is now being considered as a safer asset providing better returns amid economic uncertainty. *—PTI*

Rupee rises 3 paise to 83.60 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 25 SEPT

The rupee appreciated 3 paise to close at 83.60 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, tracking a positive trend in domestic equities and a weak greenback against major currencies overseas. However, net foreign fund outflows capped sharp gains in the local unit, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened slightly strong at 83.59 against the American currency. During the session, it surged 12 paise to touch 83.51. However, the domestic currency gave up most of its gains to settle at 83.60 (provisional), 3 paise higher than its previous close. On Tuesday, the rupee fell 9 paise to close at 83.63 against the American currency. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose marginally by 0.05 per cent to 100.52. *—PTI*

Aditya Birla raises Rs 2,500 crore through NCDs

NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

Aditya Birla Renewables Ltd (ABReL) has raised Rs 2,500 crore from markets through allotment of non-convertible debentures on a private placement basis. ABReL is a subsidiary of Aditya Birla group firm Grasim. The company allotted 2,50,000 unsecured, listed, rated, redeemable NCDs of face value of Rs 1 lakh each on 24 September, 2024, Grasim Industries said in a filing. The Rs 2,500 crore includes base issue size of Rs 2,000 crore and a green shoe option to retain oversubscription of up to Rs 500 crore. Founded in 2011, ABReL is a leading provider of solar, wind, and hybrid power solutions to public and private-sector customers across India. It has implemented 50 renewable projects across nine states. *—PTI*

Sensex settle above record 85K level, Nifty at 26k mount

Fag-end buying in banking & power helped market recoup

MUMBAI, 25 SEPT

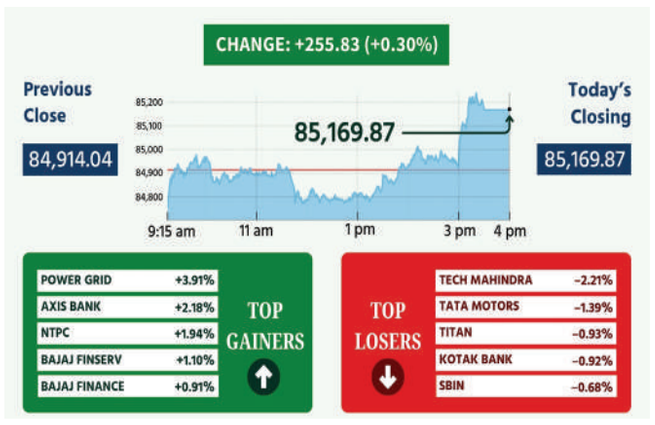
Benchmark Sensex closed above the 85,000 level for the first time while Nifty settled at a fresh lifetime high on Wednesday as fag-end buying in banking and power shares helped stock markets recoup early losses.

After a see-saw trade during the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 255.83 points or 0.30 per cent to settle at an all-time high of 85,169.87. During the day, it surged 333.38 points or 0.39 per cent to hit a record intra-day peak of 85,247.42.

The NSE Nifty climbed 63.75 points or 0.25 per cent to close at a record high of 26,004.15. During the day, it went up by 92.4 points or 0.35 per cent to reach a new intra-day peak of 26,032.80.

From the 30 Sensex firms, Power Grid, Axis Bank, NTPC, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Tata Steel, Mahindra & Mahindra and HDFC Bank were the biggest gainers.

Tech Mahindra, Tata Motors, Titan, Kotak Mahindra Bank, State Bank of India and JSW Steel were the biggest laggards.



Axis Bank, NTPC, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Tata Steel, Mahindra & Mahindra and HDFC Bank were the biggest gainers *PHOTO:PTI*

The domestic market may face short-term challenges owing to a decline in FIIs inflow and shift of funds to other emerging markets due to their cheap valuation, he added.

In Asian markets, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory while Seoul and Tokyo ended lower.

European markets were trading mostly lower. The US markets ended higher on Tuesday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,784.14 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.35 per cent to USD 74.91 a barrel.

After oscillating between highs and lows during the day on Tuesday, the BSE benchmark dipped 14.57 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 84,914.04. During the day, it jumped 234.62 points or 0.27 per cent to scale a fresh all-time intra-day peak of 85,163.23.

The Nifty eked out a marginal gain of 1.35 points or 0.01 per cent to 25,940.40. During the day, it climbed 72.5 points or 0.27 per cent to hit a new record intra-day high of 26,011.55. *—PTI*

EASY MY TRIP SHARES TANK 20%

Planners Ltd. (EaseMyTrip) saw a sharp decline of over 20 per cent on Wednesday morning following reports of a significant block deal. Shares had plunged Rs 35.88 on the BSE, and NSE, the stock was trading at Rs 35.48

AGRI TO BOOST ECONOMY

The Indian economy grew 8.2 per cent in the last fiscal (2023-24) *PHOTO:PTI*

ADB retains India's growth forecast at 7%

NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Wednesday retained India's growth forecast for the current fiscal at 7 per cent saying better farm output and higher government spending will boost economic activity.

In its Asian Development Outlook (ADO) update of September, the ADB said exports in the current fiscal will be higher than earlier projected, led by larger services exports. However, merchandise export growth will be relatively muted through the next fiscal.

"GDP growth is expected at 7 per cent in fiscal year 2024 (FY2024, ending 31 March 2025) and 7.2 per cent in FY2025, both as forecast in ADO April 2024," the ADB said, adding that India's growth prospects remain robust.

The Indian economy grew 8.2 per cent in the last fiscal (2023-24). The RBI projects growth to be 7.2 per cent in the current fiscal.

It said while GDP growth slowed to 6.7 per cent in the first quarter (April-June) of FY2024, it is expected to accelerate in the coming quarters with the improvement in agriculture and a largely robust outlook for industry and services.

"India's economy has shown remarkable resilience in the face of global geopolitical challenges and is poised for steady growth," ADB Country Director for Mio Oka said.

The outlook for private investment is upbeat, but growth in public capital expenditure, heretofore high, will moderate in FY2025. *—PTI*

Economists call for time reduction in GDP data release

NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

Economists have suggested the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) to reduce the time lag for release of macro-economic data like GDP, as this is a key factor for investment, business and policy decisions.

Officials from the ministry of statistics and programme implementation met with forecasters and economists of GDP and CPI on 24 September, 2024 in Mumbai to seek their suggestions for making the key macroeconomic data more robust.

Nilesh Shah, Member, EAC-PM, MD Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company Ltd suggested that MoSPI should look for avenues of improvement to ensure data accuracy and reduce time lag of release.

Echoing similar sentiments, Ajay Seth, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, suggested availability of timely and consistent data for better clarity, investing, business and policy decisions.

It was suggested that to have a uniform understanding of core inflation, MoSPI may explore compilation of Core Inflation.

Request for frequent such interactions, to understand the methodologies of data collection of education, health services and data for housing index, was also made, the ministry said. *—PTI*

Gold hits fresh all-time high of ₹77,850; silver soars ₹3,000

NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

Gold prices surged Rs 900 to hit a fresh record high of Rs 77,850 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid a rally in precious metal rates in the global markets, according to All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 76,950 per 10 grams on Tuesday.

Silver soared Rs 3,000 to Rs 93,000 per kg on fresh offtake by industrial units and coin makers. It had ended at Rs 90,000 per kg in the previous close.

Additionally, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also climbed Rs 900 to hit all-time high level of Rs 77,500 per 10 grams. The metal had finished at Rs 76,600 per 10 grams in the previous session.

According to traders, persistent buying by jewellers and a strong trend in the international markets were among the factors that aided the rally in gold prices.

Comex gold is trading 0.15% higher at USD 2,681.10 per ounce *PHOTO:PTI*

On the other hand, in the futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for October delivery hit a fresh record high of Rs 997, or 1.33 per cent, to Rs 76,000 per 10 gram on the exchange.

However, silver contracts for December delivery declined Rs 419, or 0.45 per cent, to Rs 91,974 per kg.

Globally, Comex gold is trading 0.15 per cent higher at USD 2,681.10 per ounce.

During the day, its prices reached a record high of USD 2,694.89 per ounce in the overseas markets. "Silver prices surged past Rs 90,000 in the physical market, with Comex silver at USD 32. *—PTI*

'Jan Vishwas bill to decriminalise budget offences'

NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

The commerce and industry ministry has received a number of inputs from stakeholders and departments to further decriminalise minor offences in the second edition of the Jan Vishwas bill, expected to be tabled in Parliament in Budget session next year, Union Minister Piyush Goyal said.

Last year, the Jan Vishwas law was rolled out to promote ease of business by decriminalising minor offences through amendments in 183 provisions of 42 acts.

Now the ministry is working on the second edition of the bill and stakeholder engagements are going on for that.

When asked whether the bill can be tabled in the winter session of Parliament, he said it will need more time for consultation, "so possible more in the budget session". *—PTI*

Swiggy gets Sebi approval to raise funds via IPO

NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

Food and grocery delivery major Swiggy has received capital markets regulator Sebi's clearance to launch its much anticipated Initial Public Offering (IPO), sources said on Wednesday.

Swiggy filed its offer document on April 30 through the confidential pre-filing route, keeping details undisclosed for the time being.

Under the confidential filing process, Swiggy will submit two updated draft prospectuses after Sebi's approval -- one addressing the regulator's feedback and the other for public comments over 21 days. Only then will the final prospectus be filed, and the company can launch roadshows for the IPO, sources said.

Swiggy, founded in 2014, had a valuation of nearly USD 13 billion in April.

The company's annual revenue stood at USD 1.09 billion as on March 31, 2023 and has more than 4,700 employees, according to Tracxn, a global startup data platform.

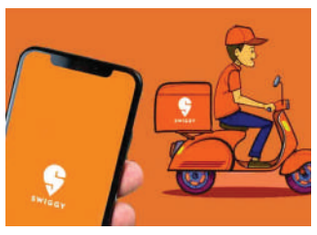


PHOTO: PTI

According to sources, the Bengaluru-based company plans to raise up to Rs 3,750 crore funds through fresh equity shares, in addition to an OFS component of up to Rs 6,664 crore.

Last week, Swiggy announced the launch of a new initiative "Project Next", aimed at providing career growth opportunities for its delivery partners while accelerating restaurant onboarding. *—PTI*

GOVT SETS UP TEAM TO ADDRESS MCA21 ISSUES

NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

The government has set up a special team to address stakeholders' grievances related to MCA21 portal, the key platform for submitting various filings under the companies and limited liability partnership laws.

There have been some issues faced by the stakeholders in using the portal.

With respect to the portal, the corporate affairs ministry on Wednesday said it has a regular review system for the concerns raised by the stakeholders through emails, helpdesk system, ticketing tools, chatbot and social media handles.

Under the laws, companies and LLPs are required to submit the 2023-24 annual filings to the ministry in the coming months.

There are more than 17 lakh active companies in the country. *—PTI*

Adani-Bombardier discuss partnership in aviation sector

AHMEDABAD, 25 SEPT

Adani Group Founder and Chairman Gautam Adani held a high-level meeting with Eric Martel, CEO of Bombardier on Tuesday, to discuss transformative partnerships in Aircraft Services, Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO), as well as Defence.

According to a social media post on 'X' by Gautam Adani, the meeting marks a potential milestone in India's pursuit of strengthening its aviation capabilities and becoming more self-reliant in the sector, aligning with the government's "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" initiative.

"Powering India's aviation growth! Had a great discussion with @Bombardier CEO Eric Martel on transformative partnerships in Aircraft Services, MRO and Defence. Together, we are harnessing synergies for a stronger, self-reliant India. @AdaniOnline #Aatmanirbhar Bharat #AdaniDefence Aerospace," Gautam Adani's post said.

Eric Martel, CEO of Bombardier along with Adani Group Founder & Chairman Gautam Adani *PHOTO: X/@gautamadani*

Highlighting the critical discussions aimed at harnessing synergies between the two companies, Adani stated that the collaboration is expectedto pave the way for advancements in aircraft services, a field where India has increasingly been focusing to reduce dependency on foreign MRO services. According to the company website, Adani Defence & Aerospace have succeeded in establishing a resilient network of capabilities through strategic collaborations with credible global partners. *—PTI*

DRIVEN BY WHEAT & RICE

India's foodgrain production hits record 332M tonne

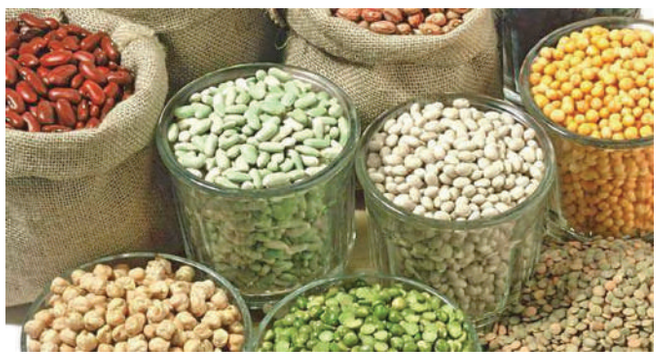
NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

India's foodgrain production reached a record 332.22 million tonne in the 2023-24 crop year ended June, driven by bumper wheat and rice output, the agriculture ministry said on Wednesday.

The final estimate for 2023-24 shows an increase of 2.61 million tonne from the previous year's 329.6 million tonne, the ministry said in a statement.

Rice production touched a record 137.82 million tonne, up from 135.75 million tonne in 2022-23.

Wheat output also hit a high of 113.29 million tonne as compared to 110.55 million tonne the previous year.



Rice production touched a record 137.82 million tonne, up from 135.75 million tonne in 2022-23 *PHOTO: ANI*

However, pulses production declined to 24.24 million tonne from 26.05 million tonne and oilseeds output fell to 39.66 million tonne from 41.35 million tonne.

The ministry attributed the decline in pulses, coarse cereals, soybean and cotton production to "drought-like conditions in southern states, including Maharashtra and prolonged dry spell during August especially in Rajasthan".

Sugarcane production decreased to 453.15 million tonne from 490.53 million tonne, and cotton output fell to 32.52 million bales (1 bale equals to 170 kg) from 33.66 million bales.

The foodgrains basket comprises rice, wheat, coarse cereals, millets and pulses.

These estimates are based on information received from states and union territories, the ministry added. *—PTI*

Airtel to launch AI-tech to crackdown on spam calls

NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

Bharti Airtel is all set to roll out artificial intelligence enabled technology on its network to crackdown on spam calls and messages, company Managing Director and CEO Gopal Vittal said on Wednesday.

The technology will be rolled out at midnight starting September 26, which will alert users about probable spam calls and messages.

"There are several indicators based on which we have identified spammers. We have developed an AI-enabled spam detection solution which analyse calls in 2 millisecond and alert users on dialler," Vittal said.

He said that the solution will be rolled out free of cost for all Airtel smartphone users.

"In 2 milliseconds our solution processes 1.5 billion messages and 2.5 billion calls every day. Our solution has been able to identify 100 million potential spam calls and 3 million spam SMSes originating every day," Vittal said.

The technology will not block the call on its own but it will be for users to decide on blocking calls, as sometimes there are 'false positives', which means even genuine calls get displayed as spam.

He said that the solution will not be able to help users getting spam calls on over-the-top apps like WhatsApp. "It is one of the pain points (spam calls on OTT apps) which we have not been to address," *—PTI*

We did not do justice to our talent: B'desh coach

Rohit and Kohli slip in ICC Test batting rankings

KANPUR, 25 SEPT

Bangladesh Head Coach Chandika Hathurusinghe on Wednesday said his players did not do justice to their potential in the opening Test against India but promised a better approach in the must-win second game beginning here on Friday.

Visiting skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto (20) and veteran Shakib Al Hasan (32) got starts in the first innings but could not convert into big knocks. In the second innings not only Shanto (82), top-order batters Zakir Hasan (35) and Shadman Islam (35) also got starts they failed to convert, resulting in a heavy defeat.

"We are a bit concerned. We normally talk about if you get a start, make it big. That's the biggest concern because some of the guys got 30 balls. And then in cricket, it's the hardest thing to get in. "But then this team, India, is posing different challenges. So we know that as well. So we have to bat for longer," Hathurusinghe told reporters here. Bangladesh have five left-handers in the squad including the top-four that has Mominul Haque. A left-right combination usually works better as it forces the bowlers to adjust their line and length consistently. However, the Bangladesh team management will not pick the playing eleven thinking on those lines.

Indian players during a training session ahead of the second test cricket match between India and Bangladesh, at Green Park Stadium, in Kanpur, on Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

"That's our best players, whether right or left. If there are any changes, it's depending on the surface tomorrow." "If we are making a change, whether batsman, or whoever is coming in, (we see) what he can bring and who will miss out. And we look at it holistically like that rather than left or right."

Riding on a sensational century in his Test comeback, wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant on Wednesday re-entered the ICC rankings at an impressive sixth position. India skipper Rohit Sharma retained his place in the top ten, though he moved down five places with two underwhelming scores. *—PTI*

B'desh T20Is: Jitesh could pip Kishan

NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

Jitesh Sharma could well pip Ishan Kishan for second wicketkeeper's slot in the Suryakumar Yadav-led Indian T20 team which will play three T20Is against the Bangladesh starting October 6 in Gwalior. The squad is expected to be announced this week. The second and third T20Is will be held in New Delhi and Hyderabad on 9 and 12 October respectively. With Rishabh Pant's focus being 10 Tests this season, Sanju Samson will be India's No 1 glovesman in the shortest format for now with Jitesh from Vidarbha believed to be ahead of Kishan in the race for second keeper's slot. Kishan's selection in Rest of India squad also means that his international comeback could be slightly delayed. *—PTI*

Raphael Varane announces retirement from football

COMO, 25 SEPT

Former France and Real Madrid center back Raphael Varane announced his retirement on Wednesday, ending a career that included a World Cup title and a big haul of club trophies.

The 31-year-old Varane signed with promoted Serie A club Como in July but injured his knee during his only appearance with the club — an Italian Cup match against Sampdoria last month. "In my career I have taken on many challenges, rose to occasion after occasion, almost all of it was supposed to be impossible," Varane wrote on Instagram. "Reflecting on these moments, it is with immense pride and a feeling of fulfillment that I am announcing my retirement from the game that we all love."

Varane was arguably the tournament's standout defender when France won the 2018 World Cup in Russia, where he scored the most important of his five international goals with a header against Uruguay in the quarterfinals. An elegant, ball-playing defender with excellent positional sense thanks to his quick reading of the game, Varane formed a solid center back pairing with Samuel Umtiti in that tournament.

He also helped Madrid to four Champions League titles and three Spanish league trophies. He moved to Manchester United in 2021 but was restricted to 95 appearances in his three seasons in England — mainly because of injuries.

Varane said he would remain at Como: "Just without using my boots and shin pads. Something I am looking forward to sharing more about soon." *—AP*

RAPHAEL VARANE, 31

POSITION: DEFENDER

CAPS:	573
GOALS:	26
ASSISTS:	8

WINS

La Liga:	3 TIMES
Champions League:	4 TIMES
Club World Cup:	4 TIMES
World Cup:	1 TIMES

"I hold myself to the highest standard, I want to go out strong, not just holding on to the game. It takes a big dose of courage to listen to your heart and your instinct. Desire and needs are two different things.

-Raphael Varane, Defender

MP announces ₹1 crore reward for Paralympians

BHOPAL, 24 SEPT

RThe Madhya Pradesh government on Tuesday announced a Rs 1 crore reward each and a government job for the Paralympics medallists from the state. "India has made significant progress in the Olympics and Paralympics. In the Paralympics too, three players have achieved success. "We have announced for Olympic medal winners a reward of Rs one crore and now for the Paralympic medal winners too, we are announcing a reward of Rs one crore each and a government job to them," Chief Minister Mohan Yadav told reporters after felicitating three Paralympians at BJP office, He congratulated winners Puja Ojha, Prachi Yadav and Kapil Parmar. *—PTI*

Tickets go on sale for WT20 WC, free entry for U-18s

DUBAI, 25 SEPT

The tickets for the women's T20 World Cup in the UAE went on sale on Wednesday with the cheapest ones costing as little as 5 UAE dirham (approximately Rs 114). The tickets were made available with just over a week left for the tournament-opener on 3 October. The event was originally supposed to be held in Bangladesh but was moved to the UAE due to political unrest in the South Asian nation caused by a students' protest over quota in jobs. "Tickets have been priced with accessibility in mind, starting from just 5 AED, while premium seating options are available at 40 AED (Rs 910). *—PTI*

China Open: Osaka cruises through opening round

BEIJING, 25 SEPT

NFormer top-ranked Naomi Osaka started the China Open with a routine 6-3, 6-2 victory over Lucia Bronzetti of Italy on Wednesday. The four-time Grand Slam champion was the headline act on the opening day and showed her class in closing out the first-round match against the No.77-ranked Italian player in 83 minutes. Osaka, who claimed the 2019 China Open before Covid-19 and a WTA boycott of China over the wellbeing of Peng Shuai forced the cancellation of tournaments in China for four years, next plays Yulia Putintseva, a 21st-seeded player from Kazahkstan, in the second round. "I'm glad that I'm able to be able to play on this court again," Osaka said on court. *—AP*

Narendra Modi felicitates Indian Chess Olympiad contingent in New Delhi on Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

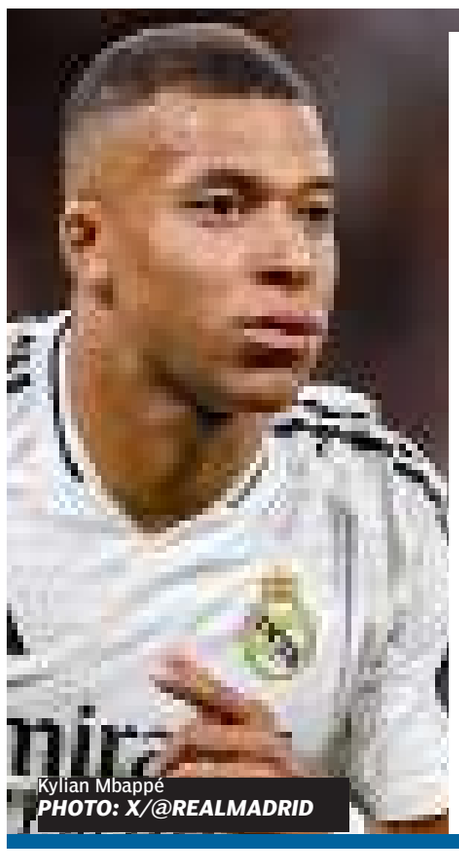
Chess Olympiad: PM hails double Gold

NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday lauded India's young chess players for their historic achievement at the 45th Chess Olympiad, where both the men's and women's teams clinched their maiden gold medals.

India made history on Sunday as the men's team defeated Slovenia and the women's team triumphed over Azerbaijan in the final round, securing their first-ever gold medals at the prestigious event. In the men's team secured decisive wins in the 11th and final round. The women's team secured their gold by defeating Azerbaijan. In a video shared on social media, Modi interacted with the chess champions, including R Vaishali, D Harika, Tania Sachdev, Vidit Gujrathi, Arjun Erigaisi, and Praggnanandhaa.

D Gukesh, the star of the tournament, won 10 out of 11 rounds in the Open category, playing a crucial role in India's victory.The players presented the Prime Minister with a chessboard, after which Praggnanandhaa and Erigaisi played a quick game of chess, which left Modi spellbound. *—PTI*



Kylian Mbappé *PHOTO: X/@REALMADRID*

Mbappé extends scoring streak as Madrid beat Alaves

MADRID, 25 SEPT

Kylian Mbappé extended his scoring streak with his sixth goal in five matches as Real Madrid defeated Alaves 3-2 to move closer to leader Barcelona in the Spanish league.

Mbappé's seventh goal since joining Madrid was a beauty, with the France forward starting a give-and-go with Jude Bellingham with a heal flick and then picking up the pass inside the area and using a nifty move to clear a defender before finding the net in the 40th minute at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

Mbappé asked to be substituted in the 80th because of a muscle ailment, according to Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti, who said it was not serious. Lucas Vázquez and Rodrygo also scored for Madrid, which extended its unbeaten run in the league to 39 matches — with 29 wins and 10 draws going back to last season.

Alaves made a late charge by scoring with Carlos Benavídez in the 85th and Kike García in the 86th but couldn't find the equalizer despite chances in the final minutes. *—AP*

Mohammedan brace for tough Chennaiyin FC test

CHENNAI, 25 SEPT

Newly-promoted Moham medan Sporting have impressed with their attacking flair in their first two Indian Super League (ISL) matches but their defensive frailties will pose a real challenge when they face two-time champions Chennaiyin FC in an away game here on Thursday. In their debut game, Mohammedan Sporting showed promise but ultimately fell short, conceding a stoppage-time goal to NorthEast United FC. Facing FC Goa, led by India head coach Manolo Marquez, in their second match, Mohammedan displayed a fierce attacking intent and held a one-goal advantage until the 90th minute. However, in a familiar pattern, they conceded another injury-time goal, resulting in a 1-1 draw. Despite the disappointment, they managed to secure their first point in the ISL. While they have shown resilience in their ability to create scoring opportunities, it's their defensive solidity that will be put to the test against Chennaiyin FC.

Mohammedan SC head coach Andrey Chernyshov has expressed pride at the confidence with which his players have taken to the ISL, hoping that they work on their physical conditions to prepare well for the coming games. *—PTI*

Bhutia launches India's largest football talent hunt across 50 cities

NEW DELHI, 25 SEPT

Football icon Bhaichung Bhutia has unveiled India's largest-ever football trials aimed at discovering and nurturing young talent nationwide.Kicking off this month, the talent hunt will span 50 cities, including Jalandhar, Patiala, Bhatinda, Chandigarh, Amritsar, Mysuru, Mangalore, Bangalore, and Belgaum.Organized by Bhaichung Bhutia Football Schools (BBFS) and powered by enJogo, the trials are expected to see over 6,000 players aged 9-18 showcasing their skills in front of AIFF/AFC certified coaches. Bhutia aims to tap into the potential of youth from diverse regions, offering them opportunities to develop their skills at the BBFS Residential Academy."

Bhaichung Bhutia *PHOTO: PTI*

Football in India needs a strong foundation, and that starts with youth development," said Bhutia in a release."Our mission is to create pathways for young footballers to rise through the ranks, whether they come from big cities or remote areas.

Through these trials, we hope to find and develop India's next football stars."The trials will unfold in phases over seven months, with over 200 participants in each city. *—PTI*

60 Lazio fans held with weapons

HAMBURG, 25 SEPT

A group of about 60 Lazio fans were stopped by German authorities after attempting to avoid a police escort ahead of a Europa League game against Dynamo Kyiv and were found to be carrying knives, clubs and other weapons, police said Wednesday.

Lazio said in a statement that the fans held overnight were banned from attending Wednesday's game, but there were no arrests. Dynamo Kyiv is playing its home games in Hamburg because of the war in Ukraine. Lazio supporters have and the club has been hit with numerous sanctions in Serie A and Europe. *—AP*

COUNCIL MEETING TODAY

Usha's 'threatening letters' is on IOA agenda

NEW DELHI, 25 SEP

The Indian Olympic Association's executive council meeting here on Thursday is expected to be a heated affair with its members adding contentious items on the agenda, including the alleged "threatening letters" issued by president PT Usha to them.

The meeting will take place in the backdrop of growing tensions between Usha and IOA treasurer Sahdev Yadav.

On Tuesday, Yadav threatened legal action against Usha for "defaming" his image after she issued a show cause notice to him based on a complaint challenging his eligibility to hold the post.

The 14 agenda points added by the executive council cover a discussion on "illegal and threatening letters issued by the President to the members of the Executive Committee from time to time".

PT Usha *PHOTO: ANI*

As per two more items concerning the president, the council will "discuss and deliberate upon the scope of powers of the president under the IOA Constitution and will decide on the need for reporting the conduct of the president to the IOA Ethics Commission".

The official communication on the meeting was jointly issued by 12 council members, including senior vice president Ajay Patel, vice-president Rajalaxmi Singh Deo, vice-president and former Olympic medallist Gagan Narang, member and former wrestler Yogeshwar Dutt among others.

The members who did not sign the document included boxer M C Mary Kom and table tennis player A Sharath Kamal, who are on the IOA Athletes Commission.

Issues related to the recent Paris Olympics will also be a substantial part of the meeting.

They include the sponsorship details of the Olympics, "additional expenditure" incurred in Paris covering the room upgrade expense of the president at an alleged cost to the IOA, and "bring to knowledge the list of accreditation cards issued to various people at Paris Olympics including various Passes and Invites".

Another discussion will pertain to the process followed for selecting the Sportsperson of Outstanding Merit (SOM) in November 2022 and their participation in the election of the IOA for elected posts.

The athletes commission had picked eight SOMs back then including Usha, Yogeshwar Dutt, MM Somaya (hockey), Rohit Rajpal (tennis), Akhil Kumar (boxing), Shuma Sirur (shooting), Aparna Popat (badminton) and Dola Banerjee (archery). *—PTI*

BMC officer completes 'Ironman' triathlon in Italy

MUMBAI, 25 SEPT

Mumbai civic body's deputy commissioner Vishwas Mote has completed the 'Ironman Italy Emilia Romagna' triathlon and expressed hope that his achievement will inspire others also to focus on fitness, officials said.

Mote took 15 hours, 25 minutes, and 4 seconds to complete the triathlon, held in Cervia, Italy on 21 September, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said.

The event had 2,439 participants from across the world, including 28 competitors from India, it said.

The challenging competition involved swimming in the Adriatic Sea, cycling, and running.

Mote was among those who completed the event, earning the prestigious 'Ironman' title, the release said.

Vishwas Mote *PHOTO: X*

"Achieving the prestigious Ironman title is a matter of pride. Despite being busy with work, everyone should pay attention to physical fitness. A healthy body enables you to do much more. I hope my success inspires others to focus on fitness and exercise," the release said quoting Mote. *—PTI*